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Pilgrimage and Change: War
Peace and Environment

by

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B.S., Southern Oregon State College, 1981

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
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1986

Approved by



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Chapter I

Introduction

The environmental crisis is an outward manifestation of a crisis of mind and spirit. There could be no greater misconception of its meaning than to believe it to be concerned only with endangered wildlife, human-made ugliness, and pollution. These are part of it, but more importantly, the crisis is concerned with the kind of creatures we are and what we must become if we are to survive.

Lynton K. Caldwell

I have begun a pilgrimage -- an eighteen-year around-the-world walking and sailing journey -- as part of my education to raise environmental consciousness, promote earth stewardship, and world peace. How I came to be on this journey, as well as the meaning which the experience and the concept of pilgrimage has for me and society, is the subject of this paper.

The concept of pilgrimage is not new. It is as old as the urge to wander, and has roots in all major historical religions as well as a number of the smaller tribal cultures including those of Egypt and Meso-America. The amount of pilgrimage and related literature written by theologians, historians, social scientists and others is staggering. In recent times, Belgian ethnographer Arnold van Gennep (Rites of Passage) and anthropologist Victor Turner (Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors) have added much to the empirical

understanding of pilgrimage as a social process. Van Gennep was able to define three distinct phases through which every pilgrim must pass. The first phase was that of separation or detachment from the familiar; the second he referred to as liminal... a sort of ambiguous state during which the pilgrim is part of no fixed social structure, and the third was that of reaggregation, which occurs when the pilgrimage is completed and the pilgrim returns to society. It is the separation from the familiar with which the story of my pilgrimage begins. The transition to van Gennep's second phase is slow and its boundaries may be unclear, but it is where I find myself at this writing.

In the second or liminal phase Turner recognized the power of pilgrimage as an agent of social change or an "anti-structure" because it is a structure that by its very nature questions all other social structural rules and suggests new possibilities. Of these new possibilities, one most mentioned by researchers and pilgrims is the experience of total brotherhood. It is what Turner calls "communitas," an intense feeling of kinship and community that transcends place and time, uniting pilgrims from all ages.

In attempting to understand pilgrimage there is a danger in a strictly empirical approach. Such investigations can yield a certain knowledge of the objects and events, but will usually ignore the spirit or creative.

force with which they are imbued. While Turner is comfortable with empirical investigation, in his study of pilgrimage he also recognizes the importance of personal documents, explanations, or interpretations of the phenomena, which he says gives the viewpoint of the actors. "These would constitute a further set of social facts. So would one's own feelings and thoughts as an observer and as a participant." (Turner, p.184)

While reading the Autobiography of Malcolm X, I was impressed with the complete change in Malcolm's former anti-white attitude to one of global brotherhood that occurred during his own pilgrimage (hajj). He was the first American Black Muslim to journey to Mecca, and he writes:

Love, humility, and true brotherhood was almost a physical feeling wherever I turned...All ate as One, and slept as One. Everything about the pilgrimage atmosphere accented the Oneness of Man under One God...Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races, here in this Ancient, Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad, and all the other prophets of the Holy Scriptures.

(X, p.325, 330, 339)

Like Malcolm X, I experienced similar feelings of "communitas," as those around me became aware of my journey. However, this paper is not about Malcolm X; it is about pilgrimage, its history and its present as understood by a pilgrim. It is not an attempt to discover "communitas" or "purity of motive," but rather to uncover the

ethical justification of my choices and actions through a method of "experiential reflection" of the life experiences that have nurtured, awakened, and delivered me onto this path of a pilgrim. Pilgrimage, as we will see, is a process. In looking for what philosopher Henry Bugbee calls "the moment of obligation in experience," "experiential reflection," with its retrospective orientation, is the method of choice because the ultimate justification in acting is primarily delivered out of the experience of acting.

Throughout this paper are woven the circumstances of tragedy, death, and realization in which we explore the finitude of life and are humbled. All serve the experience of life and make it whole. In that wholeness we may find "the moment of obligation."

Looking back, then, this is how it began.

Chapter II

A Beginning

The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey. The inner journey is the extrapolation of the meaning and signs of the outer pilgrimage, one can have one without the other. It's best to have both.

Thomas Merton
1964

Low clouds and dense fog hugged the northern California coast, not unusual for mid-January. One expected the mild winters to be cloudy and wet. This year was no exception. The day before, rain fell off and on between snatches of sun and blue sky. But by evening a high-pressure ridge that stretched from the western plateau across the state had changed all that.

Shrouded by fog and night's darkness two oil tankers collided beneath the Golden Gate. Eight hundred and forty thousand gallons of crude spilled into San Francisco Bay. The sickly sweet smell of oil hidden in the morning fog drifted up from the water. My head swam and my stomach churned like when I was a kid squeezed between two fat relatives in the back seat of a hot summer car -- air conditioner failing, windows barely open. My small body bounced at each dip and pothole.

The incoming tidal flow was nearly over. The oil reached only four and a half miles into the bay, then slowly drifted seven miles to sea before it flooded back onto the coast. Like others who had heard the news over morning coffee, I had come to watch, but in the end was grateful for the fog that gathered close and hid the dying birds, the fish and seals whose bodies cluttered the rocky shores, mouths and lungs filled with tar -- curdled black iridescence.

Within hours after the collision, thousands of unsolicited volunteers swarmed spontaneously along the beaches to rescue stranded waterfowl and to help with clean-up operations. Schools dismissed classes so students and teachers could take part. A girl with waist-length hair waded neck deep in dark water to capture distressed birds. Attempting to escape her grasp they flapped their sodden wings and slipped further beneath the surface. On the shore, armed with shovels and pitchforks, workers collected straw dropped onto the oil by helicopters and small craft. Kneeling in the sand, a grown man cried as a blackened Grebe died in his hands.

I was six when I saw my first death -- a robin crushed beneath an automobile's wheel on a city street. It had fallen out of its parents' nest. They hovered anxiously around. I begged my mother if I could take it in to care

for it until it could fly.

"Yes," she said; but it was too late.

The car's wheel rolled slowly and crushed the life from the small feathered body. Standing on my parents' porch the neighbors heard me cry, and sighed in concert, as if I had lost my closest friend. Blood rushed to my head. My heart and stomach knotted. The driver had stopped, blue eyes wide and mouth slightly open. Outside his car he looked around frantically, asking those watching what he had done.

"Oh lady, I thought I had hit somebody," he said to my mother, "or ran over someone's dog."

His voice trembled as he told me he was sorry, and for awhile we cried together on the steps. I didn't take the money he offered before he left. Alone I wept and swept the robin's flattened body, still warm and filled with bloodied worms, into a pile of last year's leaves beside the curb.

My parents tried to soothe the hurt with love and wise words about life and death, and how we all had to die someday. But in the darkness of my room my mind replayed that day's events -- the wheel slowly turning and the smile wiped from the driver's face. Clutching a pillow for some soft comfort I cried each night for months. The nightmare lasted years. I never forgot that robin.

Oil and chemical spills were nothing new in the San Francisco Bay. Only ten days before this latest spill, twelve thousand gallons of fuel oil had been dumped into an East Bay slough by a Norwegian ship. Although University of Southern California researchers reported that they could find almost no permanent damage to the marine environment one year after the 1969 oil well blowout off the Santa Barbara coast, in the last two years an additional five hundred and eighteen spills had been reported to the Regional Water Quality Board. The impact of these spills was still in question. On the Bay, petroleum and petro-chemicals were big business and accounted for twenty percent of all the ocean-going cargo. Standard Oil was the biggest carrier and the owner of the tankers that had collided in the fog.

On the car radio, emotionless, the announcer's voice droned on about the morning news, then, stuttering, it turned hoarse and cracked under the weight of oil-soaked straw. Shifting down from third into second to pay the bridge toll, I wiped away a tear.

"...and if you don't like the news," he said, "go out and make your own."

His words sounded like a challenge, like we should go out and start a revolution. It made me feel uncomfortable.

Even the Constitution talks about the peoples' rights of resistance and revolution when it comes to overthrowing oppression or changing unjust laws. The major difficulty that arises is in agreeing on the methods and limits of resistance -- is revolution to be accomplished with or without violence? In this respect I was a pacifist.

But across the Bay in Oakland, the Black Panthers were doing more than talking about revolution. Angela Davis had been indicted on charges of murder, kidnapping and conspiracy stemming from the summer shoot-out at the Marin County civic center. Five people had died. My world was at war. Automatically I reached for the tuning knob and turned it to the local jazz station to soothe myself with music.

Beside me, my friend Jean, idly wrapping and then unwrapping twisted strands of hair from around her finger, was talking over the sound of the engine, the music and noise of city traffic that slipped through a crack in the window. Behind wire-rimmed glasses her eyelids seemed strained and not quite recovered from the cosmetic surgery intended to maintain her youthful appearance. A member of a prominent Gold Rush family and Standard Oil heiress, she was almost apologetic about that extravagance and about the mess that washed onto the shore. Her brother was a Standard Oil executive and she wondered what strains he might be feeling. The oil company had responded immediately -- mobilizing tons

of equipment and clean-up supplies. But for some that wasn't enough.

In San Francisco, emotions were running high over the spill and Standard Oil was under attack. In protest, half a dozen young people dumped crank case oil around the entrance of the company's headquarters. "Standard Oil Destroys" and "Ecology Grows Out Of The Barrel Of A Gun" were painted red and green on the walls and sidewalk. In the pond outside dead fish were dumped. On the other side of town, sand mixed with oil was thrown onto the home believed to be that of Standard Oil's board chairman. As Jean talked about the spill, her brother and the politics of oil, I could hear the revolution -- an old anger creeping back into her voice.

Ever since the 1969 "People's Park" take-over in Berkeley, she had talked about revolution, and the evolution of brotherhood, Native American awareness, and ecology that she felt a part of. It was already manifest in the West through popular music and the back-to-nature movement. But when she went to her brother claiming to have discovered evidence of their own family's Black and Native American heritage, it was vigorously denied. A short time later in a private meeting at the Marin County civic center she was declared mentally incompetent and her inheritance taken away.

This was more than an oil spill to Jean: it was the revolution. Though yet to be proven as anything other than an accident, Jean saw the collision as sabotage, a deliberate act by the ship's captain against Standard Oil. She believed the oil company had ripped off her family and the people. Now the true history would be told -- A Black and Native American "Roots" story that spans over one hundred fifty years and five generations. It would culminate in a trial uncovering a conspiracy that was to unite a family and restore an inheritance to thousands. Jean suggested that the settlement would exceed the four million dollars that Standard Oil would spend on clean-up and damage claims resulting from the spill, by billions. Armed with money and the truth we could set the country and the world right.

Before his assassination, Martin Luther King had already said something about the truth setting you free, and thousands of people, including me, took to the streets to work and march in search of a dream of equality and social justice that still eluded us. It was not difficult to remember dark days on Chicago's West Side working as a Community Organizer. People lived in apartment houses with an overpopulation of rats and roaches, often no running water and sporadic heat through the winter. Tenant unions, marches and rent strikes were our only recourse in

confronting brutal and uncaring landlords and city officials. But that reality was behind me and for the moment the truth thrust in front of us was oil in the Bay, and the dead and dying on the beach. It brought together thousands of Bay Area residents, for a time at least, to think about the environment and ecology.

My initial interest was in science and biology in particular. It was a traditional pursuit, beginning soon after I learned to walk. My father's habit was to take me on Sunday excursions to visit the art museums, aquarium, park or to my favorite place, The Franklin Institute, a well-known science and technology museum. My father worked as a lineman for the Philadelphia Electric Company. Having left school before finishing high school to help support his family, he was not a scientist but aware of the importance of science in our lives. It was with this awareness that he introduced me to the scientific world through exhibits at the Franklin Institute. In the darkness of the Fells Planetarium, I listened to his words as we shared a wonder. Inquisitiveness in scientific matters became natural to me.

Encouraged by my parents and teachers at nearly every level, I entered my first science fair at the Institute, a study of prehistoric animals. I was in sixth grade and I won no honors, but to this day I remember the names of many of the animals that I represented, such as

the vegetarian brontosaurus, and fierce meat-eating tyrannosaurus. Later, in high school, I worked on a study of sound and electricity, putting together a homemade electric organ in the process. Unlike the science fairs in which the contestants were judged by static displays, the high school competition, which was sponsored by the Pennsylvania Jr. Academy of Science, required a presentation and demonstration before members of the Academy as well as other members of the scientific community. I received an honorable mention.

Later during that year I was accepted into a special program for high school students at Hahneman Hospital and Medical College. The program, referred to as the bio-science program, was designed to expose high school students to the life sciences by assisting doctors in actual laboratory research, attending lectures and educational field trips. I worked with Dr. Benjamin Kimmelman on an independent research project studying the effects of dental stains as related to tooth histology, during which time I delivered a paper on the work completed at the Pennsylvania Jr. Academy of Sciences' state meeting in Pittsburgh. The following year as a bio-science student, I began work on the feasibility of dental implants in laboratory animals. A senior in high school, I was asked to address the Philadelphia Engineers' Club on the progress of the work

being done.

Despite my knowledge and interest in the life sciences, my first attempt at college study proved disastrous and I withdrew with poor grades. After starting college with great expectations, failure was hard to take...for me and those whose expectations rose and fell around me. It was a period in my life when I was dissatisfied with myself, and, like many college students of that day, I was dissatisfied with society.

It is reasonable to expect extreme dissatisfaction when one feels incapable of effective action, especially when involved in the social activist environment of the sixties. In 1880, artist Vincent van Gogh was dissatisfied, writes Brewster Ghiselin in The Creative Process: "As we know, the trouble was not that van Gogh was incapable of action. It was rather that he had not found that expression of his impulses which would satisfy him." (Ghiselin, p.12) But I took little heart in the knowledge that some of our culture's greatest writers and artists failed in traditional settings, only to succeed later on their own terms.

Two years later I found myself working for the Chicago Medical School as a lab technician on a cancer research project. My work focused on the behavioristic classification of tumors based on whether there was a metastasis or not. The difference was that benign tumors

do not metastasize. A metastasis is a secondary growth originating from the primary tumor and growing elsewhere in the body.

The research we carried out was primarily with industrial carcinogens which might also be found in the home, such as carbon tetrachloride. Readings revealed that many naturally-produced chemicals were carcinogens, including fungal toxins and various plant products, like safrole from sassafras root, cycasin from the cycade nut, and an unknown factor from the bracken fern (*Plitridium aquilinium*), a cherished food in parts of Japan. Undoubtedly, still more plant products are carcinogenic. Clues come mostly from regional studies showing that the incidence of one type of cancer is higher than elsewhere. At the time I made no connection of this work with ecology and environmental studies; I had not even heard of such words. It wasn't until I had left my position at the school and witnessed the San Francisco oil spill that these words began to take shape and have meaning.

All I knew about ecology was that it had something to do with air pollution in Los Angeles. It was even becoming a problem in San Francisco as the number of cars in and around the city increased. Then there was conservation -- recycling glass bottles and aluminum cans. I knew there was also some concern about over-population, but I had been

too busy to pay much attention. There was more concern about when the war in Vietnam would end, Jean's revolution...and the settlement money that would follow.

Jean was always saying that you had to have money if you wanted people to listen. The more money you had the more they would listen. Money not only got people's attention, it gave you time for important work by relieving you from the burden of having to make a living. Before we met, I had been trying unsuccessfully to get some recording companies to listen to an avante guard jazz group that I managed. They incorporated visual images as a part of their music. Too early for Music Television to sign a contract, members of the group struggled just to survive. "Hurry Up and Wait" was one of the compositions performed by the group. We used to smile knowingly to each other whenever it would come up. It seemed we were always waiting for something. Lack of money was a problem, but it was not the only one -- heroin was another.

Jean and I talked about what we would do with the settlement money. I always had dreams of sailing off to the South Pacific and she the South of France. I pictured a sailboat. Jean liked sailboats, she had been raised around them, but in the end she insisted they were too much work and that we should get a small, nuclear-powered submarine and go off exploring the sea with Jacques Cousteau. When I

mentioned something about the danger of nuclear contamination she dismissed it with the usual: "You can do anything with money." She saw no contradiction as she blamed the loss of her thyroid on earlier exposure to radioactive material at Washington's Hanford nuclear reservation during the 1940s. I hadn't thought much about the problems and consequences of nuclear contamination and, for the sake of the fantasy, I overlooked it. My father worked for one of the first electric companies to build a nuclear generating station. As a child it was something that I had accepted as good without question. During those days not many people were concerned with the disposal of nuclear waste.

Jean rolled another of her cigarettes. Lighting it, a pungent odor filled the cab. "This is really the secret of my youth," she said, letting go a lungful of smoke and passing the joint to me. I could still hear her voice from within the blue-grey haze. "One day we will turn on the radio and they will be telling our story," she said, "All we have to do is wait." I could feel a quiet despair.

It all sounded very good; we would be rich and live in a clean environment with peace and justice for all. We only had to wait -- wait for the money and for the story to be in the news. I had heard it all before. It had not

really satisfied me then and it did not satisfy me now. It offered a modicum of false hope and an avenue of escape from any responsibilities. We were not responsible for any of the problems in the world and certainly not their solutions. Everything was determined by events and people outside of ourselves.

I turned to Jean and asked what she thought we could do right away. I was tired of all the waiting and it was becoming more difficult to see how this revolution she talked about would change the attitudes of people toward the environment. There were volunteers involved in the clean-up and workers attempting to save what wildlife they could. I wanted to do something that would change policies so oil spills wouldn't happen.

"We could live a more simple lifestyle and not need so many cars," I said, repeating something I had read or that had been part of some past conversation about how we should conserve gasoline and reduce air pollution.

If there was not anger in my voice there was at least frustration and I was stretching beyond what I thought was reasonable when I suggested that we give up driving cars altogether. It suprised Jean and it even suprised me.

"Yeah! That's a great idea," she answered, after a few moments of thought, "but we can't afford to do it right now. We'll get some money, then we can do it."

The idea was radical but not new. "I wish I didn't have to drive this car," had been voiced in extreme frustration by thousands of motorists throughout the nation, stuck in rush hour traffic. It was at least an intriguing revolutionary thought. More Americans had been killed by automobile accidents than any other way. But no speeches or protests took place concerning the war we waged against ourselves in the name of speed and convenience. The number of fatalities and the true cost of that war, to me and many others, remained hidden.

When I had been smoking, I liked to hear myself talk and I would ramble on and on to whoever would listen. Jean had the same propensity. Together she and I constructed in our minds the utopian society built on a pedestrian foundation. Yes, living more simply and not driving automobiles sounded like a good idea, but even as I said the words, the complexity of my daily life, my sixty-mile-an-hour habit, told me it was not something we would give up easily. Besides, as Jean had said, we couldn't afford to do it just yet. We needed money first. I told myself that the money would buy the time to slow my life down to a walk. "When the money comes," I said, "I'm going to start walking...that's a promise." But the words I had spoken were just that, and they drifted lazily out the window with the curls of blue-grey smoke that clouded our

minds.

We followed slowly behind the procession of dim taillights a circuitous route that led back across the bridge. The windshield wipers keeping time with thoughts and phantoms appearing in the fog, we left the stench of birds, oil-soaked and dead, behind.

At the time I was living with Jean and her 10-year-old daughter, Ceci, in a small redwood cottage in Inverness, a bucolic summer village with a winter population of about five hundred on the western shore of Tomales Bay. Forty miles north of San Francisco, it was situated on the Point Reyes peninsula bordering the National Seashore and the Tomales Bay State Park.

Several months passed without Jean's revolution taking place. A vagary of the wind brought in the spring fragrance of wysteria hanging at the window. It rustled the curtain and roused me from a sound, late-morning sleep. "That wind means something," I said to Jean as I rolled over clutching at the covers. "I don't know what it means, but something is going to happen." I was right. Later that day we found out that Jerry Tanner, the son of a neighbor, had been lost in the bay. A sudden storm had come in from the south and capsized the boat he and his family were in when the engine failed. Miraculously, his wife and son had been saved.

Jerry Tanner was about twenty-five and a deputy sheriff for the county. It was unusual that we could be friends. I had my mistrust of the establishment, and he took every opportunity to show his mistrust of me. When I first moved into town back in 1969 I was one of two Blacks that lived in the community. In the first year we managed little more than civility. But as time passed there arose those occasions when our distance and coolness felt silly and out of place -- when the closeness of a small town stripped away pretensions. One time late at night we sat alone beside the road and talked -- asking each other questions about who we were, mostly about our families and how well we liked the community we shared. Jean was older than us and could remember him as a kid. Once an elementary teacher, she always talked to him in her school teacher voice that sounded as if she were about to box his ears and send him to the principal, even when he came to pull up the marijuana she had planted in the garden.

When Jerry died there were no words to express the feelings which we desperately needed to express. We picked some peas and took them to his mother with our respects. But that was not enough. We wanted to do something more -- to celebrate life. "We could go dancing," I suggested. Jean loved to dance. She agreed.

It was still early afternoon when we decided to go

and the music would not begin until later that night. There was nothing to do before we had to leave. Yet at the same time there was something that begged our doing. We thought of taking a walk up on the ridge. We knew we wanted to walk; it was something we both liked to do a lot. After a good walk through the woods and over the hills to the beach we felt renewed. The idea struck us at the same time. It was only twenty miles to San Anselmo where the club was located. We would walk. The walk would be a life celebration in itself. After making arrangements to leave Jean's daughter with neighbors, we gathered our day packs and left.

It was dusk by the time we had made our way over the first of two hills that separated rural West Marin from the main body of the county. We were still determined but not in the best of moods. Almost five hours had passed and we had only come ten miles. Walking on the shoulder of the asphalt road that we had always driven, with cars buzzing by, was different from the peacefulness of the deer trails and cow paths we took to the beach. There was little time for reflection. We wondered if taking this walk was a mistake. Our feet hurt.

The road wound through the redwoods of Samuel Taylor State Park. We stopped to rest beside one of the giants. Night had fallen and the lights of the passing cars annoyed

us. There was a chill in the air. Our bickering turned into quiet conversations about how good it was for us to walk and how Jerry wasn't a bad guy even if he was a deputy sheriff. A lot of the time Jean was plugged into the portable radio that she carried everywhere. Cars would stop and the people inside would ask us if we needed a ride. We would say no after a few seconds of thought and then talk about what we were doing. Mostly we were met with words of encouragement; sometimes in disbelief they would shake their heads as they drove away. The couple in the Jaguar sedan was like that. Their car glided to a quiet stop beside us and an electric-powered window lowered at the touch of the elegantly dressed, middle-aged woman. Beside her, her companion busied himself shifting luggage to make more room in the back seat.

"We're going all the way to San Francisco," she said.

"No thanks, we're just walking," answered Jean.

"Well, we can just take you as far as the city," she replied.

Jean repeated herself.

"What! You don't want a ride," she exclaimed.

"Really, it's all right, we have room."

I guess they couldn't believe that anyone dressed as casually as we were would turn down a ride in a new Jaguar

-- had it been the day before, they would have been right. Jean explained.

"Oh, we are sorry," she said, "but we understand."

They drove off shaking their heads. Just the same we liked it when people stopped. It broke the monotony of the road. Our feet had numbed to the pain and we were enjoying the motion and the relative solitude -- the sounds of our footsteps and the smell of the grass in the night air. We were hungry.

It was nearly midnight when we dragged ourselves into the Jack In The Box, a fast food restaurant at the edge of town. Coming in off the road and out of the night dark, the neon lights made us squint. As tired as we were we brought in with us a certain exuberance, an adrenaline rush. From behind the counter the cook, a pimply-faced kid still in his teens, looked up at us with a bewildered expression. "What'll you have?" he asked. We ordered, but when he learned that we had walked from Inverness to go dancing and why, he refused to let us pay. He claimed he had never met anyone who had done something like that.

When we reached the night club our friends were happy to see us, but it was past one in the morning and they were already playing the last encore -- "Get Together." It was the unofficial anthem of the Hippy generation that they had made famous. "Love is but a song we sing, fear the way

we die..." We were really too tired to dance anyway. We declined the rides home and struggled to the top of a little hill behind the club and drifted off to sleep, huddled together next to a tree. The following morning we walked five more miles and registered at the Holiday Inn.

After hot showers and a day of sitting by the pool, the pains of the walk into town were distant memories. We were looking forward to the walk back home. We left Mission San Rafael taking the back way through Lucas Valley so we could avoid the heavy traffic and the need to climb two hills. While we walked and during a light lunch by Lake Nicasio, Jean talked about the Spanish land grants that made up today's big ranches, and the local Indians: the Maidu and the coastal Miwok who supposedly had all died off. She laughed as if the foolishness of such a belief was self-evident.

"Hey, I get it," I said pointing a finger in her direction and then at myself, "You walk and me walk. Get it? Miwok!"

She didn't think it was funny, but I did. I laughed for almost a half a mile, until laughing got old.

"Things have just changed a lot in my forty-three years here," she said.

We walked the rest of the way in silence.

We arrived home a little before dark. There was

just enough light to see the toilet paper ribbons stretched across our front gate with balloons and a sign that read "Welcome Home John and Jean" painted on the bottom of an old cardboard box. Inside, Lance and Debbie, two friends, were waiting to congratulate us, more for having walked the fifty miles than anything else.

Lance and I had met two years earlier when we lived at the same communal house in Logunitus. That was when I was known as Pisces John. Then the only revolution we were waiting for was the Aquarian age. I walked a lot then too. Now Lance was married and expecting his first child. He and his wife Debbie lived just a half a mile away and we spent a lot of our visiting time with them.

To celebrate our return, Lance unwrapped some of the homegrown weed that he was famous for and lit up. We sat together on the queen size bed that took up most of the living room and passed the joint around. We didn't have any on the walk. For me it was a relief. Jean turned on the radio and plugged back into the revolution that was yet to happen. She claimed the radio talked to her. Each song held some special significance concerning the revolution and she would make a comment, laugh or shake her head disapprovingly at some inside joke.

"So how was it?" Lance finally asked.

I did not have much enthusiasm for a conversation.

I was tired and the smoke had already begun to strip away the adrenaline glow and the cool freshness of the outside that had come in with us. I was nodding off into some deep thought about life being so fragile and how there were no guarantees as to when we might die; it could end at any time. POP! The cork slipped explosively from the champagne bottle and shot up to the ceiling and careened off the wall. Everyone was laughing.

"It was all right," I answered, feeling more and more like a party. "For a little while, though, I hoped we didn't have to come back."

Lance and Debbie peered over the tops of their glasses and looked at me as if I had hurt them.

"What da ya mean John," Lance asked in a quiet voice, "don't ya like it here?"

"No, that's not what I mean," I answered. "I like it here fine. Maybe that's part of it. I just didn't want to come back home, to a place that I like and fall back into the same old way of living life that I didn't like and that I know has got to change."

Lance looked at me a little bewildered.

"What do ya have to change?" he asked.

Jean moved off the bed, into the wicker chair and started nervously to twist her hair around her finger.

"Don't look at me," she said. "I'm in the middle

of a revolution and I have to drive. Besides I like getting around too much to give it up."

Lance smiled at her from behind his reddish-blond beard.

"It's just that I have been telling myself that one day when I had the time I was going to stop driving and..."

I did not get to finish the sentence before Debbie interrupted.

"Well, we are getting ready to have a baby so it's nothing we could do," she said.

After last winter's oil spill we had had this conversation. Now I could see that it was turning into a debate, and there would be no winners. We changed the subject and talked about refinishing Jean's little sailboat that sat out front in the yard. Jean and I were tired. Lance and Debbie, sensing that we could use some time alone, left.

The walk, the welcome home and the conversation with Lance and Debbie stayed with me all night. I had gotten to the point of taking the first step on a journey that I felt was necessary for me, and it did not seem right to stop now. I have had similar feelings before. When I had been on a particularly fine camping or hiking trip I dreaded getting back to the car for the drive home. That would mean that the trip was over. I wanted to explore beyond the

boundaries of a trip. I wanted the experience to go on and I wanted to savor every moment of a time I knew was special. Of course there was something of value that came home with us from such experiences, but I wanted the specialness of the experience to fill my life. And life, I had learned again with the passing of Jerry, was finite, something lived in the present and reflected in the past. If I was ever going to have the time to explore a lifestyle on foot, it had to start now. So as I lay in bed that night and let the last few tired miles slip away into a waking dream, I toyed with the idea of taking a walk and not coming back. The sweet fragrance of the wysteria drifted through the window.

I went to see Lance in the morning. There was more we had to talk about. I found him working in the garden with Debbie. They stopped, and Debbie offered me some lemonade. I accepted and Lance and I sat on the porch and talked. We had come to know one another pretty well over the last two years, after living in that commune house in the valley. Together we had tried to be vegetarians. In desperation he and some other members of the household went out to poach a deer. They got arrested. We had watched each other change, from Pisces John fasting for 30 days to purify his body, to smoking and drinking too much (I still did), to the suit-wearing, new-car-driving manager of an aspiring music group. It had been like living a dream,

only I didn't know I was dreaming.

He could tell that there was something on my mind. He knew me that well and it was easy to talk to him. It didn't matter if we were heading in different directions.

"Say, when's Jean's court settlement gonna happen?" he asked.

Sometimes when Jean told people about her revolution it would take the form of a court settlement. She would leave out the stuff about the family ancestry. She tried telling Lance and Debbie about it once, but he said it didn't make any sense. On the other hand he could understand Jean's court case against her brother, ex-husband and their attorney for conspiracy to deprive her of her civil rights when they relieved her of her inheritance.

"I don't know," I answered, reaching in my coat pocket for a cigarette. "She says it's going to be tomorrow, but it's been tomorrow for months now. I think it's just a false hope."

I offered Lance the pack.

"Is that what's bothering you?" he asked.

I shook my head no. "I've decided not to drive cars anymore," I said. "Do you think that's crazy?"

He leaned back against the outside wall and looked across the yard. A humming bird buzzed up to the red feeder hanging from the eaves. We watched it until it buzzed away

disappearing into the trees that surrounded the property. Then Lance started.

"Hell no that ain't crazy. If you don't want to drive cars then you shouldn't. Ya know lots a times I get fed up with some tool or somethin' I'm usin' so I just put 'er away until me or it has a change in attitude."

He let out a roar of laughter that shattered the stillness. Debbie looked up from the garden and smiled. I laughed too and smiled all the way home.

Jean and I spent more time walking out to the beach and even over the hill to town. We both avoided using the little blue Volkswagon Bug that sat forlornly in front of the house. Finally Jean gave it to Lucy Shoemaker's son, Marty, who lived up the road. After awhile Jean got tired of the walking and the waiting for the money that never would come. She started driving again, mostly to visit lawyers and make appearances in court.

"The revolution will be happening any day now," she said.

As for me I had already taken the first steps of the longest walk in my life and they felt good. My own revolution had already begun.

Chapter III

The Revolution

The transition to life on foot, though voluntary, was not easy, and not everyone was happy with my decision. It was not unusual to see someone walking along the road between Inverness and Point Reyes Station, nor was it unusual to be offered a ride from a passing motorist. Most of the people traveling this stretch of road during the weekdays were residents. Beyond Inverness the road ended at the beaches and the Point Reyes lighthouse, a favorite spot for tourists. I could be found walking at almost any time, no matter what the weather. I was frequently offered rides. I always refused them. Most of the time that would be the end of it, and I would continue on my way.

But sometimes the occupants of the cars wanted more -- some explanation other than that I just wanted to walk. That is when I would talk about the oil spills and air pollution that I did not want to be a part of. At the time it was the only explanation I could give, besides being able to enjoy where I lived for the first time. It was, despite their blank expressions, what they seemed to want to hear. Some nodded their heads slightly while others voiced their agreement, telling me how they wished they had the time to

walk. Many of these very same people had helped with the bird rescue and cleanup during the San Francisco spill. There would often be an uncomfortable silence and they would drive off, leaving me to my thoughts.

In his auto-biography, Malcolm X, when commenting on his conversion from atheism to Islam, wrote that the hardest and greatest thing for any human being to do, is to accept that which is already within and around them (p.164). There was no question in my mind that walking was natural and right to do. In later readings I was to discover that over two thirds of the world's population still got around on their own power (Energy and Equity, Ivan Illich). Like the birds who were born with wings, I was born with feet, and could remember spending summers walking on Uncle Luke and Aunt Sadie's farm along the Chesapeake Bay. There was no electricity or running water. Water was drawn from the well. There were no cars. Once we stepped off the train we walked the sandy dirt roads and trails, and the oyster beds we tended by sail.

I remembered the horse-drawn wagons of the Amish in the countryside of my native Pennsylvania. We passed them slowly on our Sunday drives. Excitedly I would wave but they did not look and never waved back. My father told me that they didn't believe in driving cars. In my youth I wondered why. For me, two decades later, walking had

become a personal solution to my own and to some of society's ills -- reaching back in search of something lost and striking out in hope of finding something new. Whether I could survive on foot, physically or emotionally, in an automotive culture as the Amish did, was another matter, and after word of why I was walking got around, a few people would stop me on the road to argue the point.

One day just outside town I was stopped by such a person. He was a familiar, mustached face I had yet to attach to a name. The gravel crunched beneath the tires of his car as he pulled onto the shoulder of the road. Rolling down the window, he smiled and asked if I wanted a ride. I thanked him but said I wanted to walk. "Why don't you want a ride?" he asked. The smile had disappeared from his face and I could tell he wanted more than just the usual, "I like to walk." But he didn't wait for my answer. "I heard about you," he snickered. His eyes narrowed. "You won't ride because you think you're better than me. Isn't that right?" I shook my head and tried explaining about the oil spills and automotive pollution, but that made little difference. "Oh yeah, well I like the birds too. Are you trying to make me feel bad?" he shouted.

I found myself standing beside the road yelling at this man who was yelling at me while trying to make a point. I could soon see that nothing I could say short of

accepting his offer of a ride to town would make any difference. He told me he looked at my decision not to ride in cars as a personal attack. While this was a very revealing point of view, I didn't like the direction this yelling match was going and was more than relieved when Lance walked up and defused the situation by making some enthusiastic remarks of his own about living in a free country.

I left them there still talking and continued on to Point Reyes Station, my head filled, replaying real and imagined conversations, attempting to prove to myself that I was right. I didn't like the anger I felt; it ate into my gut. I realized then that I had taken a stand that challenged a way of life, a way of seeing things. In doing so I was demanding change. It was no wonder that I would be challenged. I was challenging myself. I felt frustrated because though it was clear to me, I was unable to articulate beyond the simple phrase as to why I walked.

A few evenings later I stopped at a phone booth and dialed my parents' home in Philadelphia. My mother answered and we spoke for a while about relatives and things. I casually mentioned that I had stopped riding in cars and how happy it made me to walk. She laughed a wry laugh and asked me how I was going to get home to visit. The question had occurred to me. I didn't have an answer. "Well, that's

very nice Johnny," she said, "but when a person is really happy they don't have to tell people about it. It just shows." I asked her what she thought about me not driving. She said she thought it was fine and then added more for herself, I think, than for me, "Don't worry, you'll be riding in cars again; this is only a phase you are going through."

The next day I found myself crying beside the road. Each time a car passed I felt as if the world was passing me by, and I was getting left behind. It occurred to me, as it often did, that it was only my stubbornness that kept me on foot and that I should start riding in cars again. It had been about two months since I had begun walking and I was getting tired of it. Sometimes I felt as if I were dying. Parts of me were.

I went to the doctor for a checkup. I hadn't really felt that ill, but Jean worried about the swollen lymph glands she had noticed on the side of my neck. The doctor was even more alarmed, and there was less than guarded talk about cancer. He strongly suggested that the glands be removed as soon as possible. I was just as concerned but settled for a biopsy. It would be a simple operation done with a local anaesthetic, but it would have to be done in Petaluma, twenty-five miles away.

I had decided to continue walking even if I was

sick. If death was inevitable I reasoned that I might as well die living what I believed, no matter how naive. Anything else, I thought, would be giving myself up to sickness. The weather was pleasant and the Point Reyes - Petaluma road made its way through some of the most rural landscape in the county. There were only two large hills to climb, and if I left in the early morning I could reach Petaluma in a day, register at a motel close to the surgeon's office, spend the night and make my appointment in the morning.

It was hot as I made my way up the last hill. All day turkey buzzards circled overhead and made me think of the dead and dying hidden among the summer gold hills. I hurried past a fallen deer -- a road kill. The putrid smell of its rotting flesh rose from sweet grass and made me nauseous. I was growing tired, and my feet had started hurting. I had yet to consider the real importance of taking care of your feet if you walked. Sometimes shoes did not fit as well as they might. I would just grin and bear it. Maybe put a bandage on a bloody blister and continue to trudge on, feeling the pain in each step. Later I found that the ritual of washing and powdering my feet at the end of each long day took away the pain and prepared them for next day. At the top of the hill I could see an old black oak offering shade at the side of the road. That is where

I would stop and rest, I told myself, and sip on the water I carried in my day pack.

Once, beneath the tree I removed my shoes and leaned back against the rough trunk. The vultures still circled in the summer thermals -- dark thoughts in a blue sky. Then I remembered why I had climbed this hill and why Petaluma was stretching out before me in the distance. What if I did have cancer? For the first time fear of dying seized me.

I looked away from the silhouettes in the sky and extracted the pack of cigarettes from my pocket. Blue-grey curls of smoke were already wafting in the air when the absurdity of my actions struck me. How could I, in all honesty, care about pollution caused by cars or be so concerned about the health of the environment when I did this to myself?

It was then I realized that walking was not enough. Perhaps it was a start, but I was going to have to change not just on the outside but on the inside too, in more ways than I could now imagine. I shook my head as I read the familiar warning on the package label, coughed a laugh and gave up smoking then and there.

The lymph nodes were not malignant but on that hill I vowed to live my life as if they were -- to learn to balance on the edge between awe and taking life for granted. Years later in an environmental studies class, I would be

reminded of this episode when I saw Kurosawa's film "Ikiru." The film is about a bureaucrat who, upon finding out he has cancer and only a year to live, realizes that he has not really been living. He leaves his job and spurns his family to search for what he has been missing, which he mistakenly believes he finds in the affections of a young girl. It isn't until he is rebuffed and at the bottom of his depression that he finds life in helping the residents of a poor district overcome the monumental obstacles they encounter when they attempt to build a park for their children. In one scene a writer who befriends Mr. Watanabe, our hero, shortly after he finds out about his illness, says, "How interesting it is that men seldom find the true value in life until they are faced with death."

The film makes an interesting comment on how undergoing a personal crisis can instigate an unusual and often altruistic action. In a speech on "Surviving Personal Disaster," Dr. Frank Clark, a University of Montana professor in social work, noted that the successful survivors often "engage in some secret service to others" that gives them "a sense that something constructive is coming out of the horrible circumstance." These people, he said, with great commitment would look for every opportunity to do something helpful, no matter how small. People who really do well when undergoing a personal disaster are

those who look at them as an opportunity for change and not as a threat.

I recently received a manuscript from David Grant, a writer who with his family gave up the use of automobiles for "walking-in-place" when the death of his father became imminent. I asked him what bearing the death of his father had on his decision. In a letter he said:

Since a teenager I've felt "the call" to walk around the world. A couple of years ago I decided to start walking-in-place (if not yet around the world) by my fortieth birthday (August 16, 1985). When I returned from the New Mexico firetower work this past summer -- to Saint Louis and my dying father -- I knew it was time... and what better time to begin than on the arrival of Hiroshima day -- with its around-the-world connotations...and also better to begin with my father still alive (though fading fast)... as a continuity with him and by way of including his life force in this work of mine.

At first glance the death of my friend had this effect on me, and the increased possibility of my own imminent death was a reinforcement. From a deeper perspective, when viewed in the light of Bugbee's criteria for interpreting "the moment of obligation in experience," there are other similarities which will be looked at later; for in understanding obligation we understand something of the justification, "the good," and what is right action.

For awhile I tried to do those things I did before I had stopped riding in cars. Then, if I wasn't zipping off to arrange a concert for Spectrum or conducting some other

business in San Francisco and the East Bay, I was driving somewhere to go shopping, seeing a lawyer, visiting friends, sightseeing, in search of pot or some other such entertainment. Having placed myself outside the mainstream of motorized transportation, I found I had more time on my hands than I knew what to do with. I looked for something to do close to home. I chose community service and joined the Inverness Volunteer Fire Department. Even if I wouldn't ride the engine, it was agreed that I could be useful as the base radio operator. Just the same, I went through the regular training and learned basic fire fighting techniques, as well as how to operate all the fire company's equipment.

Not long after Jerry's death there was some talk in the community about establishing a bay watch. Tomales Bay was only about a mile across at its widest point, and on a clear day people on either side could see any boat that might be in trouble. Still it had taken almost an hour before anyone responded to the capsizing of the Tanner's boat. I joined a group of Inverness residents and took a course in seamanship and small boat handling that was given in town by the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

We had hoped to establish a coordinated search and rescue unit on Tomales Bay. However, the residents of the bay are an independent lot. There was resistance to conforming with the uniforms and regulations associated

with a Coast Guard Auxiliary unit, so we worked with another ad hoc association known as the West Marin Advisory Group whose goal was to come up with a West Marin Disaster Plan. The group in Marshall was brought together by a fire that destroyed the town's historic hotel earlier in the year.

The first objective of both groups was to make a house-to-house canvass in each area to locate buildings, water supplies, liquid propane gas tanks, and main electric circuit breakers. The location of these things would be relevant during any disaster. Under the heading of "Search and Rescue" the plan was to have people who lived on specific vantage points along the bay be alert to craft on the water, particularly during times of inclement weather. An emergency number would be furnished and arrangements with Synanon, a drug rehabilitation facility, were in the process of being made so that they would dispatch a rescue boat tied up at their marina. I became the "walking coordinator and liason" between the Inverness and Marshall sides of the bay. It was a good way for me to meet most of the people who lived on the bay. It was a good way to introduce people to other aspects of my walking.

It's a fourteen-mile walk around the bay from Inverness to Marshall: four miles to Point Reyes Station and then ten miles north on Highway One. I had made the drive often to spend Saturday night drinking and dancing at

the Marshall Tavern which had adjoined the hotel. After a few drinks it was a deadly fourteen miles back home, and it had claimed the lives of several friends. I had been lucky.

I still made the trip, but now on foot. It was a pleasant walk along the two-lane highway lined with cypress and the pungent eucalyptus trees. The road rose, dipped, twisted and turned along the eastern shore as it passed the occasional house, amid small herds of dairy and beef cattle behind barbed wire fences. Bright orange poppies crowded the shoulders of the road as it skirted a cluster of rustic fishing cottages and vacation homes. On weekends, especially in the summer, traffic was heavy and tiresome. When the tide was low I took the old railroad right-of-way close to the water. The tracks had long since been removed. Only the roadbed and the skeletons of the trestles that once crossed streams and mudflats remained. Sometimes, just a few yards from the highway, it was another world, like sailing on the bay: accessible solitude -- a wilderness beside the road.

It was after the oil spill that I found myself rowing on a stormy Tomales Bay; having shunned motorized transportation at this time I often spent many hours on the bay rowing or sailing. The tide had changed and a stiff wind forced me to land this particular day on the shore of the Tomales Bay Oyster Company, which sat across the water

from Inverness. I made my way over a barbed wire fence and along the beach to the house set back beneath some cypress trees, and knocked.

Gordon Sanford opened the door. He was a rotund man, perhaps a bit overweight, who smiled from behind steamy glasses.

"We're closed," he said, removing his frames and wiping them across the front of his shirt.

His face was splotchy red. The warmth of the kitchen issued from the opening of the door. I could smell fresh-baked bread.

"I know you're closed," I answered. "I just rowed up on your beach and I was wondering if I could use your phone to call home. They might be worried with this storm coming up the way it did."

He looked surprised, then invited me in and showed me to the telephone.

"You been out rowing in this weather?" he asked.

I nodded yes, and made my call. On the other end I had hardly been missed.

Gordon introduced me to his wife Ruth and insisted that I stay for tea and something to eat. The conversation turned to oyster farming and I told about spending my early summers in Virginia with my aunt, uncle and cousin without electricity by the Chesapeake Bay, with hand-drawn water

from a well and harvesting oysters from a small inlet. I hadn't thought about that in such a long while, it was as if I were hearing it for the first time. For a moment I was a kid again, feeling the mud of the Chesapeake between my toes and chasing fiddler crabs down into their holes.

It turned out that they had lived on the Chesapeake, too. I was offered employment on the spot, and for the next several months I worked there, harvesting and culling oysters. I learned about acquiring seed, planting, rack construction, predation control, health standards for public consumption, and the importance of water quality, which after the oil spill in the San Francisco Bay had special meaning for me. But even Gordon thought it was odd when I refused to use the motorlaunch to inspect the oyster beds. I rowed or poled instead. Then one day, straining against a flooding tide, I had to acquiesce. Gordon came smiling and towed me in.

We sat on a worn grey wooden bench in the sun in front of a concrete work shack and talked. It was here I learned that Gordon was a retired physicist.

"Heart problems had forced me to look for a less stressful occupation," he said, as he lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply and coughed.

Immediately I saw his chain smoking in a completely different light.

"Oyster farming seemed a natural."

We talked a little about that for awhile and then he brought up my walking.

"You know I really admire you for standing up for what you believe," he said, "But do you really think it's going to change anything?"

I hunched my shoulder, and said barely audibly, "Probably not."

A flock of seagulls rose on the wind from a mound of sun-bleached shells and hovered in the sky, screaming.

"Take oil for instance," he said. "When we run out of that we'll just find something else."

Anticipating what the something else was, I told him that I didn't think nuclear energy was such a good idea. It wasn't safe. But the partial meltdown at Three Mile Island hadn't occurred yet, and Gordon was ready with all the facts and figures that made my simple statement sound like just that, a simple statement.

"Besides," he continued, "you're talking about fission. The new technology will be fusion. Pure and clean unlimited energy."

For the next few minutes he tried to explain. I tried to understand, and for awhile I lived in his world where technology would save us. "It's just around the

corner," he assured me. I had never met a physicist before, and I liked Gordon a lot. When he talked about the Chesapeake he reminded me of home. Perhaps what he said was true. I didn't know, and in a way it didn't matter. I liked the way I moved over land and water. I knew I would continue just the same. For in the walking I discovered a thread that ran through time, beyond the need of personal protest, connecting me to that life with Aunt Sadie and Uncle Luke on the Chesapeake Bay. I never used the motorlaunch again.

Chapter IV

Bamboo and Silence

For Christmas that year Jean's daughter, Ceci, gave me a black, hardbound book with blank pages and a set of children's watercolors. "I thought you might like to paint pictures of what you see when you go walking," she told me. I had been talking earlier about Picasso and that I had heard he did some sort of art every day even if it was to just make a mark on a piece of paper. It had impressed me and I wished I could be so disciplined. I began at dawn on New Year's day. I painted the sunrise and my life changed.

My first attempts at painting were little more than muddied, colored splotches. I told myself I would continue to make one painting every day for as long as I was able. It was eye-opening and therapeutic. Each day I spent looking -- knowing that at some point I would have to find a subject to paint. For the first month I usually chose some landscape or flower study. I was determined that my art contain only what I thought of as natural subjects. I would purposely leave out automobiles, houses and telephone lines. They seemed to be in the way of what I wanted to experience. I didn't know what that was. But when February came around something happened. I discovered Bamboo.

I had never really noticed it before except when I was a kid at the YMCA day camp in Philadelphia's Wissahickon



Park. There it was, a bright, electric-green stalk that grew beside the streams. We pulled it up to make the spears and swords that were so much a part of our little boys' games. It never grew much taller than us. But back at the Y in the city, the life guards carried nine-foot bamboo poles to pull us from the pool. I reached for them when the water closed in over my head. Sometimes bamboo took the

shape of furniture, dried and lacquered by the pool, or inexpensive fishing rods. It was only during a weeding job in a neighbor's garden that it was pointed out to me, low, dark green and leafy. I didn't know how many varieties there were in the United States but I was told that if I looked, it could be found all over the county. A transplant from the Far East, it grew wild but was most often found in local gardens because it required little care. It endured.

I was always looking for something new to paint. I sat down with a a sprig of this newly-rediscovered plant and went to work. It was no masterpiece by any stretch of the imagination, but when I finished I felt as though I'd touched something that went beyond putting paint on paper. It was as if I had found something I was looking for, only I did not know I was looking for it. That night I went home and showed Jean and Ceci who nodded approvingly while I smiled and talked about how bamboo grew all over the place.

"Yeah, I know," said Jean. "That's what's growing in the front yard by the fence."

I was embarassed at not having noticed the bamboo that was growing in our own yard. It wasn't that I hadn't noticed it growing there. It was just that I hadn't noticed it enough to mean anything. I wondered how much of life got by me that way.

In Japan, bamboo is ubiquitous, and products from

the plant are found in every aspect of Japanese life, from eating utensils to heavy construction, from smoking pipes to ceremonial fans. As a popular art motif it often symbolizes long life, and in one of Japan's earliest works of literature, The Bamboo Cutter's Romance, a stand of bamboo gives up its treasure, the daughter of the moon who had been exiled to earth.

I did not know what treasure bamboo had in store for me, but the next day I was out looking for it, and each day for the rest of the month bamboo was all I painted. It grew in busy places along roads and highways. It bordered city streets in wooden pots, and quiet places -- gardens with little Buddhist shrines, by ponds and streams, and in our front yard next to the fence. It was ubiquitous. Some days I would draw it on the spot, and some days I would sit and try to memorize it. Wherever I was it didn't matter, on a noisy street or by a tiny stream, I would sit and stare -- taking it all in, the moment, the quietness. At the end of the day I would try to put down what was in me of the woody stems -- the rustle of the leaves, the way the bamboo bent -- the quiet that I found inside -- the beauty of a simple grass. Sometimes, I don't know why, I'd cry a silent cry and dew would turn to tears.

February 22, 1973. The sky threatened rain. I had spent the day walking over the green hills that came down

from the ridge. They turned to golden dunes and flattened into a wide beach at the edge of the sea. White deer grazing on tender grass moved in and out of a drizzly fog. The deer had been imported from India by a local rancher as part of his stock. Now they were wild, and it was considered special to see them -- like seeing a white buffalo or an albino rhino. They possessed a kind of magic. I found a quiet place to draw the bamboo that was in my mind -- electric green and brown. It grew in someone's garden back in town. It was especially quiet. The next day would be my 27th birthday, and like a New Year's eve I spent it in reflection.

I had already changed my life as dramatically and as drastically as I could imagine, but I knew that was not enough. It was something in the way I talked, argued and defended walking. I was always trying to convince myself of its correctness and my sanity. I still did it, and when I wasn't talking, I was thinking conversations and arguments that drove me to near distraction. I remembered the phone call to my mother and how I told her I was happy. I wasn't. Exaggerating and outright lying were not strangers to me. I didn't like it, but what was there to do? I told myself I would change, but how? In the morning I would know.

That night I slept out on the mesa a little ways from the house. Stars were still shining in a partly cloudy

sky. Later the pre-dawn quiet was interrupted by the sound of rain. I felt the first few drops on my face, and in the dark I reached automatically for the protection of the plastic tarp that was beside me and returned to the edge of bamboo dreams. I was not surprised: my dreams were filled with the stuff and the two realities sometimes overlapped.

By morning the rain had stopped, and large resplendent drops hung from green, slick pine needles. The air was alive with moist smells. Beside me I heard the bamboo rustle. It was my twenty-seventh birthday and to commemorate its passing I was struck with the idea of remaining silent for the day. It would be my birthday gift to myself and the friends that had to put up with my chatter. I had been talkative as a child and even more so in later years. While attending a Catholic high school I was attracted by the idea of spiritual devotion, and I thought of pursuing a vocation as a Trappist monk, but the prospect of observing the order's strict vow of silence dissuaded me.

Perhaps it was the specialness of the day or the introspective mood I found myself in that brought about the decision for a day of silence. It was nothing that I had done before. It would change my life.

In the morning I found myself walking quietly down the rain-soaked path to the pitted asphalt road which led

into town. At the post office Helen Giambastiani, the postal clerk, had just finished sorting the first-class mail when I entered. From behind the counter she handed me a few letters retrieved from the general delivery slot. "Good morning, John," she said, smiling. When I didn't answer, she added, "What's the matter, cat got your tongue?"

Smiling, half out of embarrassment, I placed an index finger across sealed lips. I pointed to myself, then lit and blew out the imaginary flames of an invisible birthday cake that I had created in front of me with a few gestures. One of the first persons I encountered that day, Helen understood. I repeated the pantomime many times with often amusing results. Several weeks later, still silent, the attitude of some of the townspeople and many of my friends concerning this most recent change was often less than amusing.

Inez Storer, a friend and teacher at Sonoma State College, said my not talking had made her "mad as hell" at first, but later she presented me with a book she felt explained at least for her what my silence was about: The Creative Process, edited by Brewster Ghilesin. It consisted of essays by various people in the creative arts attempting to discover what was common in the experience of creating. Each artist had their own unique approach that seemed to work for them, but in the final analysis the key to creativity remained a mystery to me. Several years would

pass before I became receptive to Ghilesin's insights, such as the importance of listening. Eventually, Inez, impressed with the evolution of my own art, invited me to be a silent guest lecturer in one of her art classes at the college. She felt that her students needed exposure to new ways of seeing things. The days continued to pass without my lips uttering a sound.

I spent the next few months walking alone, usually up on the ridge and out to the beach. I would sleep there and listen to the pounding surf. Sometimes I would visit a family in one of the several houses that had been built before the land had been purchased for the National Seashore. Other times I would construct a driftwood shelter and build a campfire in the sand. There I would stay for several days, watching the birds and exploring the ever-changing beach.



On the ocean side of the ridge the tall, gnarly bishop pines left off and the old ranch trail made its way along a green canyon wall that bloomed in season with paint brush, lupine and shooting stars. A watershed, alders sprang up around the little brook that started out as a spring higher up. The trees grew denser as the trail continued on into the valley and hid the panorama of the low green mountains and the blue sea. There were special places here where Jean and I used to come when we wanted to be alone. A little further on was the pond where we fished. From there a rutted dirt road led back up to the ridge. It was only a mile or so and could be driven in a four-wheel drive. We had done it so many times. But walking made it even more special, more remote.

I enjoyed the feeling of remoteness that came from walking and the closeness that came with being on foot. As I walked I felt as if the land I touched became mine. The more I walked the more I possessed. It wasn't a possession in a legal sense. It was a feeling, and what I felt I wanted to share with the world. Slowly I realized that I had become possessed by the land. I loved this place with its magical white deer that appeared in the fog while the ocean wind spoke in the trees. I walked and walked. The days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, and the months into years.

I had stopped asking whether it was right or wrong to walk, or if I would ever drive or ride in a car again. The answers to those questions didn't really matter to me. What did was that I was here now, and this was the path I had chosen, or the path that had chosen me. Then one day after much thought as to the merits of non-talking, and to settle the almost constant inner struggle as to when to end my silence, I made the decision to continue, as an experiment, until my next birthday. Still, my mind raced with what seemed to be a thousand-and-one ongoing conversations and unanswered questions. Any fantasies I may have had about some mystical peace or happiness that automatically came with closing one's mouth soon vanished in the cacaphony of my own thoughts.

The months passed slowly. The din of inner chatter faded into quiet echoes, and I began to write. Now the daily watercolor in my black bound book took on new meaning and any subject was grist for the mill. I looked forward to the time each day as a meditation and used the paintings to communicate with friends and people I met: stories in watercolored images without words. A banjo that sat gathering dust in the corner of the house now accompanied me wherever I went. On long solitary walks along the beaches, in the hills or along the winding roads between the towns, the music was with me, and the spirit of bamboo had taken

quiet root within.



Chapter V

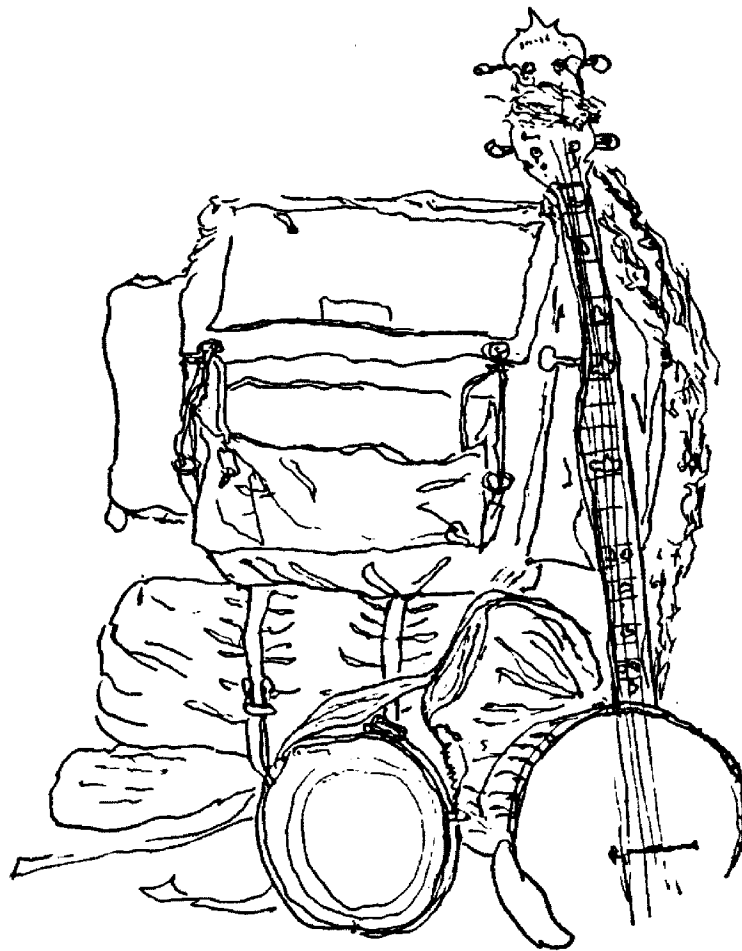
Thousand-Mile Summer

Another birthday had come and gone without a word. I had grown used to the silence. It was not the time for me to speak, and I knew it. I felt at ease to listen and let me be in the eyes of others and myself without verbal defense or hype -- to let the life within me seek its own level. Just the same there was serious talk in the community that my walking and silence was a sign that the end of the world was near. Some spoke in hushed voices of the second coming. When I learned of this I would shake my head and smile.

Even with such drastic changes, eventually my life just settled into a comfortable routine of long solitary walks throughout the countryside, gardening, tending bees, painting and playing music. I had gotten good enough on the banjo to play on Sunday afternoons at the Marshall Tavern for meals and tips. Though I could no longer be a member of the fire department, I volunteered to sweep the downtown street. It felt as if I had found my niche and could live safely in Inverness forever. Instead, the road called.

Gathering my watercolors, journal, and banjo, I took off walking north along the coast. I wanted to learn to

build wooden sailing boats. The idea of building a boat and sailing around the world had fascinated me ever since I was a child. If I was going to learn about building wooden boats, I reasoned, what better way to begin than to learn about the trees. A boatbuilding friend gave me the name of a sawmill that dealt in Port Orford cedar. It was considered one of the finest woods available for planking, and it only grew in a small area on the Oregon coast.



Five hundred miles and forty-five days later I reached the little town of Langlois, Oregon. R.D.

Tucker's mill was a small, family operation not very far from the beach, and he took a few days to answer all my questions about the range and the qualities of the wood. He had a few of the cedar logs right there in his yard. Stripped of their bark they looked much like any of the several other varieties stacked in long rows. On closer inspection, the fibers of the Port Orfords were stringy, which added to the tensile strength of the wood, and a pungent oil made the tree resistant to pests.

"It's getting harder to come by, though" he said, twisting a sliver of wood and passing it to me to smell.

Recently a mysterious water-borne disease had begun wiping the trees out. I asked about the possibility of my finding a dying tree and milling the lumber by hand with a pit saw.

"Sure," he said, chuckling to himself. "But that's an awful lot o' work."

After watching what was involved in sawing up a tree at the mill with all his machinery, I tended to agree with him. Just the same, he sent me off with a map of the Siskiyou National Forest to look at trees, and a lead on an old pit saw.

It was the first time I had taken mountain trails so remote that I was alone for nearly a week. While I rested by a stream, a black bear passed close enough so that I

could smell its breath, unlike anything I knew, warm and wet. My mouth fell open and stayed that way until the bear ambled up the trail and out of sight. I saw stars. It was not that I was afraid; it was just being so close to something wild and so big. There were no moats, no bars that separated us. In fact, I didn't feel separated at all. I felt vulnerable.

It was my last day in the forest. On a ridgetop portion of the trail I looked into the ruggedly beautiful Kalmiopsis Wilderness. On the map it appeared as a large green spot surrounded by a thick red line in a blue-grey field. It intrigued and frightened me all at once. So taken was I by the experience of that first long walk and the remoteness of the forest, that the Kalmiopsis became the focal point of an annual pilgrimage I would make for the next five years. I had yet to find the trees that I had been searching for, and as I made my way slowly back home, I tried to imagine what lessons this wilderness might hold for me.



Chapter VI

The Bridge

By early morning the March rain had stopped its gentle fall upon the Inverness Ridge. On the mesa below, blue-grey smoke from the stovepipe chimney circled lazily through the still-wet trees. Inside the one-room cabin nestled amongst bishop pines, laurels and tan oaks, I sat lingering before the wood-burning stove, sipping a cup of tea and listening to the fire crackle in the morning stillness.

Jean's revolution had failed to materialize, and she had sold her house and moved into an apartment in town. I still lived in Inverness in a small cabin on the property of Sim Van der Ryn. He was an architect and a professor at the University of California's School of Environmental Design in Berkeley. The cabin had been built by his appropriate technology class during one summer. Sim had been a friend for several years and he saw great merit in what I was doing. It was during the time I had spent with him that I had learned much about environmental ethics and activism.

It was the time of the oil embargo. In the cities people waited in long lines and fought for the chance to buy gas for their cars. He introduced me to the writings of

Ivan Illich on "energy and equity," a study dealing with the low thermodynamics of the automobile and the need for "deschooling society." Illich makes a convincing argument for "net transfer of life-time," stating that "beyond a critical speed, no one can save time without forcing another to lose it," and at the present high levels of energy consumption we cannot help but to degrade our environment. It put not driving into a new perspective.

I reread the letter I had received almost two weeks earlier. It was an invitation from Sim to be a guest lecturer at one of his classes studying energy, resources, and environment. The letter explained that the class was interested in low energy life styles, and wanted to meet with people whose way of life exemplified a movement toward fossil fuel independence and harmony with nature. This would be my first walk into Berkeley. It was six days before the class was scheduled to meet.

I folded the letter and replaced it in one of the pockets of the backpack that was slowly becoming a part of me. I rose from the chair, lifted the pack to my shoulders, adjusted the straps, and reached for an almost-full canteen hanging on a nail by the door. I picked up the banjo in the corner, and tuning it almost unconsciously, walked softly out into the cool grey day.

My intended route, approximately some seventy-five

miles each way, would take me through Marin County to Novato, around San Pablo Bay via Vallejo, then south through the towns of Rodeo, Hercules, Pinole, San Pablo, Richmond, El Cerrito, Albany, and finally into Berkeley.

Three days had passed before I reached Black Point. I left the rails behind and returned to the road (Highway 37) in order to cross the Petaluma River into Sonoma County. It wasn't long after that a black and white highway patrol car pulled over to the side of the road just ahead of me. Leaving the car, a patrolman approached, holding his cap on with one hand, waving a greeting with the other. I had no idea why he was there and in a moment my heart was pounding.

"Hey, would you like a ride?" he shouted over the sound of the wind and noise of the traffic.

It was with a smile, so many signs, and a hastily produced letter that I declined.

"Actually I saw you with the banjo and was wondering if you could play me a tune. It's my favorite instrument," he said.

We sat together in the parked patrol car, out of the wind's fury, and I played a couple of my favorite banjo tunes that felt like the way I walked. He tapped his feet and clapped his hands and thanked me most profusely. Afterward, I stepped back onto the road and headed into the wind, turning only to wave good-bye.

"Good luck," he shouted.

We both went our respective ways perhaps just a little bit happier. Before reaching the Napa River, I repeated this performance, with slight variations, with two other highway patrolmen; it seemed the first officer had radioed his fellows.

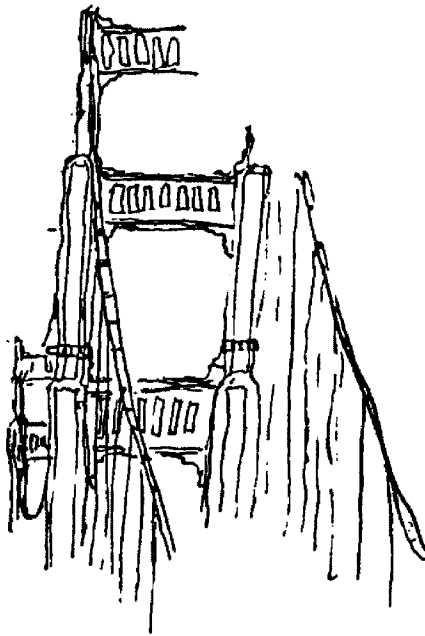
I awoke early next morning from a sound sleep beneath the Napa River bridge to the buzzing tires of the traffic passing overhead. It was a cold day, still windy, and large grey clouds threatening rain drifted slowly in the sky as I made my way across the bridge and into Vallejo.

On the waterfront I sat in a Denny's Restaurant and ordered breakfast, two eggs up and hash brown potatoes. The waitress returned with my order and an extra egg because the cook had travelled with a backpack before and thought I could use the extra nourishment. I could. With warm friendly eyes he came from behind the counter to shake my hand. I thanked him.

"Oh, it's my pleasure," he assured me.



Before long I was sloshing across a muddy field, watching seagulls fly and a column of white smoke pour from the stack of a steel-grey ship at Mare Island. I made my way up to the toll plaza of the Carquinez Strait Bridge only to find that it was illegal for pedestrians to be there, and I was then directed to the office by one of the toll collectors. Once inside I was informed by the stern-faced



toll plaza guard on duty that all bridges (not including the Golden Gate) crossing the San Francisco Bay and the Carquinez Strait, barred both pedestrians and cyclists. Of the two alternative routes offered, the shortest was through Fairfield, to Rio Vista where it is possible to cross the Sacramento River, then south to the San Joaquin River, across the Antioch Bridge through Antioch, Pittsburgh, Martinez, and numerous towns, adding approximately 128

miles to my journey to Berkeley, making a total of about 200 miles each way. He couldn't keep from smiling as we traced with our fingers in disbelief again and again the Fairfield-Rio Vista route to Berkeley.

Only after showing the invitation to lecture at the university and playing the banjo tunes that the highway patrolmen seemed to like so much (for which I was rewarded generously in spare change) was I permitted to cross the unused southern span of the bridge, which had been temporarily closed to automobile traffic for repairs. I arrived in Berkeley that night, and was able to keep my engagement at the university. With the aid of an overhead projector and someone turning the pages of my journal, "The Road, Friends, and Places," we travelled from Point Reyes along the Northern California-southern Oregon coast and back again, through watercolor, poems, and music.

With all the talk about an energy crisis and the need to conserve, I thought it was ridiculous that government regulations thwarted the most natural and inherent ability of its citizens to comply. Walking and not talking was not enough. More needed to be done. I promised myself to write Governor Brown about the lack of pedestrian and cyclist access across state toll bridges. And I did, once I got home to Inverness.

I received an answer from Howard Ullrich, the

state's director of transportation, who suggested I use the system of small vans, buses and BART presently in operation to shuttle cyclists and pedestrians across the bridge or to provide access across the Bay. My answer to him read, in part, as follows:

Upon careful examination of these systems, you will notice that while the pedestrians or cyclists are partaking of this form of transport, they are in fact no longer pedestrians or cyclists, but have become consumers of industrialized transportation.

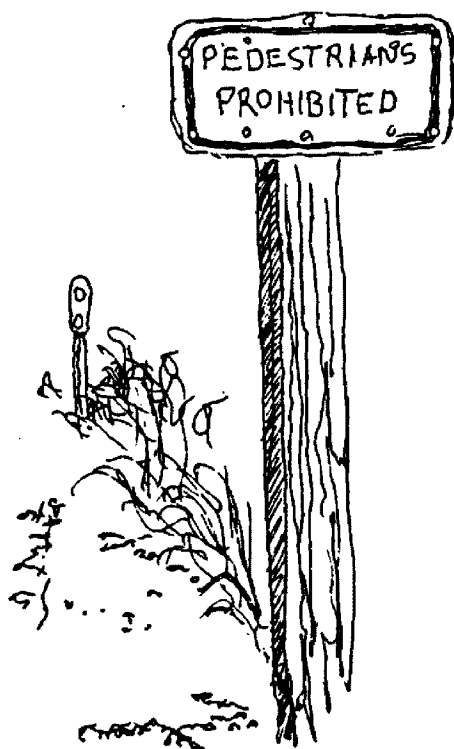
While I am not against this type of transportation for those of us who wish to use it, I feel that especially during this time of concern related to environmental pollution and energy crisis, the lack of pedestrian and cyclist facilities only points out our lack of planning and concern for one of man's oldest, non-polluting, low-energy forms of transportation.

Still, I am encouraged that we have at least entered an era of awareness of this issue.

It was the beginning of a campaign that would take me to the state capitol and a meeting with Governor Jerry Brown. From that experience I wrote and submitted my first article to the San Francisco Sunday Magazine, and it was accepted. The state did pass a law which prohibited the construction of any new bridges without adequate facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, but the question of existing bridges remains unanswered.

I felt it was an important issue, and it showed me that there would be obstacles on this path to overcome

besides those of my own making. But summer was coming, and my mind was filled with visions of the wilderness. I gathered my belongings and left home for the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.



Chapter VII

Teachings in the Wilderness

John Muir was one of the first to look at wilderness as a place where people, shaped by civilization, could go to be recreated and refreshed, not as a resource to be exploited for its minerals, timber, and wildlife. The words of Roderic Nash, a professor of history and environmental studies at the University of California, express a view shared by many contemporary wilderness proponents:

"Wilderness...is a profound educational resource schooling overcivilized humans in what we once knew but unfortunately forgot." (Miller, p.206) This was the education I sought.

Three months had passed before I arrived in Brookings, Oregon. I checked in at the Chetco ranger station. Dick Wessle was big, red-haired, and a smoke jumper for the Forest Service. When he spotted me inside the office amid the early morning bustle, he hurried over and buried me in a bear hug, lifting me into the air, and shaking me with his laughter. "Well you made it back," he roared, squeezing the breath from me, before setting me back down on the floor. Typewriters stopped clicking and for a moment everyone looked up from their work. Some of them smiled and waved. I smiled and waved back.

I had met Dick on my first walk to Oregon. Now he had me by the arm and was telling everyone within earshot what a great guy I was, and how I walked all the way from San Francisco just to visit the wilderness. Some of them remembered me from my last trip, so I spent a good part of the morning renewing old friendships before making final preparations for my wilderness sojourn. I planned to be gone for three weeks.

It was the end of summer, and there would be few others walking through. Everyone agreed that I would have a great time hiking. We were looking over a blue-on-white Forest Service fire map, and Dick was talking about trail conditions, points of interest, and the unusually high fire hazard due to summer drought, when he stopped mid-sentence and smiled.

"You're going to get to meet Perry and Ruth," he said. "That'll be the high point of your trip."

Dick went on to explain that Ruth and Perry were gold miners who had been living at and operating a placer claim in the Kalmiopsis for almost two decades.

"Oh, they're real characters," he continued. "Be sure to stop by their cabin and introduce yourself. Tell 'em I said hi, too."

With that he put a little mark on the map where their cabin was located.

"You'd be missing a real experience if you pass up seeing the Davis'," a ranger standing nearby added.

I smiled and nodded my head. In spite of all they had said my idea of a wilderness experience did not include sitting down for a chat with a couple of miners. I had visions of unspoiled landscape and solitude -- the fewer people the better -- or so I thought.

The coastal weather for the last several days had been bordering on rain with brooding skies, and morning and evening fog. But the mountains in the wilderness, about 30 miles away, were reported to be dry and hot. The fire precaution as I left Brookings, following the Chetco River, was high.

Two days passed before I arrived at the bottom of Quail Prairie lookout tower (elevation 3,033 feet) on the western Kalmiopsis border. I could see the evening fog moving in from the coast, spilling over the mountains. Large thunderheads rose in the sky. Slowly, step by step, I made my way up the stairway, carefully maneuvering with a 75-pound pack. I became increasingly aware of the fresh breeze that was moving the tops of the trees just below me.

Once inside, I silently introduced myself to the lookout on duty who was busy observing and reporting an incoming storm to the ranger headquarters in Brookings. It was a small room furnished with a little wood-burning stove

for heat, a gas stove for cooking, a table, a few chairs and a small cot with some storage space below. In the center of the room was the fire finder which enabled the look-out to report the location of forest fires.

Not much is known about the fire history of the Kalmiopsis prior to the establishment of the forest in 1907-1908. But charred stumps and blackened tree trunks give silent evidence that, at one time, most of the area was burned over. People speculate that some of the fires were caused by fur trappers, traders, prospectors and early settlers; others say the damage was done by lightning. And as usual, both are probably right, in part.

The sun disappeared behind dark clouds. Night had come during mid-day. The temperature fell, making me shiver. A few moments later the storm reached us. Rain dropped in great silver-grey sheets onto the metal roof with a deafening roar, and the sky turned blue-white with lightning, adding to the confusion of the elements. I was grateful to be inside, but our vulnerability was spoken without words in the expression on Jerry's face. Small fires ignited where lightning touched the trees, sending plumes of white smoke into the stormy sky. At their camp near the Illinois River, the smoke jumpers were put on standby. In a matter of seconds, our visibility was cut to zero by the fog. The wind howled around us with gale

force. There were more flashes of lightning followed by rolls of thunder and driving rain. The tower trembled, and so did I. "It's good to see natural powers and processes greater than our own." writes Nash. "The lessons of such experiences are precisely what are needed if the human-environment relations are to be harmonious and stable in the long run." (Miller, p.206)

In a little while the fog was gone, giving us a clear view of the storm. The rain continued to fall for some time, extinguishing the fires, and the smoke jumpers were taken off standby. In the west there were no clouds, only the sun. Two rainbows arched across the sky and at their end, Vulcan Lake. I watched the sun sink silently, crimson-orange, into the sea. This was my welcome to the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.



The next morning, as the sun peeked over the trees and the coastal fog sat thick like steamy milk in the valley, I descended the trail to Boulder Creek Camp. The day dissolved into the rushing blue waters, splashing white among the shaded gray rocks, then seeking out the deep green pools where trout grew. The trees reached up steeply to the sky. In the heat of the afternoon I slid headfirst into the crystal water, headlong into a new environment. It was cold, and my body shivered. Blue shadows danced all around, and sunlight shimmered on the rocks and sandy bottom. The salamanders disappeared and a water snake squirmed to hide under a large, submerged boulder. I broke the surface and stroked for shore. I crawled up on the sand bar and sat refreshed in the sun. Two kingfishers flew by doing their mid-air acrobatics. I tried to think of all the places I had seen them before, but there were too many to remember, and they all just melted into one as I sat by the flowing water.

In the morning I was up in the chilly air, musing at the thought of another dip into the rushing water. I quickly dressed and finished the last bit of tea from yesterday's teabag. It wasn't long before I was stepping gingerly from rock to boulder, crossing the creek. Most of the trails were in good condition, but some sections were in great need of repair. Huge, fallen trees created awkward

barriers with dangerous slides which had to be negotiated with the greatest of care. I passed through an area of *Kalmiopsis Leachiana* for which the wilderness is named. Unassuming, it is a small shrub somewhat resembling the rhododendron and is known to botanists as one of the rarest shrubs in the world. The plant's small red flowers bloom from mid-May through June and may be collected by special permits given only for scientific purposes.

Three days later I reached Slide Creek, and made my camp among some abandoned mining equipment and a few fallen shacks. In the eastern and southwestern portions of the *Kalmiopsis* there are still a few roads that were constructed by miners as access to their valid claims. They were built mostly during, and immediately after, World War II for the excavation and stockpiling of chrome ore, for which there was a great demand. However, Slide Creek and a few other places were especially known for their rich gold deposits.

It was the sound of horses that startled me and brought me back from my fireside dreamings. The trails inside the wilderness are extremely primitive and are not recommended for horseback. I watched as the horses and four riders picked their way nervously down the rock-strewn trail to the creek and rushing water below.

While the animals watered, one of the travelers crossed the stream and approached my camp with an extended

hand which I clasped in friendship. He spoke only his name; all else we communicated in hand signs and by drawing in the earth. They would camp that night on the other side of the creek.

Pink clouds; gray and white in spaces of darkening blue sky. The clapping of horses' hooves on the rounded stream rock; the fragrant smell of cedar burning. Rushing water and the sounds of crickets. All these voices mingled as the wind pierced the evening darkness.

The following morning my new neighbors awoke to discover two of their horses had run off. I found another in a mild state of shock after it had plummeted part-way down the side of a canyon the day before. I learned from my friends that the section of the trail they had just traversed was quite dangerous on horseback. And I assured them that if they ventured any farther they would discover similar conditions ...at least the way I had come. In the company of another backpacker who had slipped into camp unnoticed during the night, a few of us spent the day sharing our wilderness experiences and our views on wilderness preservation.

Early the next day two riders on horseback left for Onion Camp, beyond the eastern border of the wilderness, via an old mining road; three others followed on foot. The horse they had hobbled had escaped with its companion

during the night. I was alone again and I drifted back into a rhythm of silent contemplation. They had left some rice, flour and extra salt, all of which would enable me to comfortably extend my wilderness adventure.

* * *

Sometimes the change comes from within,
Seeing with no eyes,
Hearing with no ears,
We begin

September 23, 1975

Slide Creek Camp

I somehow managed not to mind the silent clutter of abandoned mining equipment that lay rusting about...twisted cable, red and yellow painted motors, rods and pistons exposed...machines chipped to the bone. I became absorbed in watching the canyon wall, looking for the way I had come just days before...the trail, lost in earthy colors among the trees and rocks. The trees were clinging, holding on with roots knotted to stone...others slipping, falling to the stream below. A few of them I got to know. As Nash says:

Forget size, terrain, the presence of wild animal, the absence of human technology -- wilderness, ultimately, is a state of mind. If you think a certain piece of country is wilderness, then it is wilderness -- for you... The dude from New York generally has very different criteria for determining wilderness than does the grizzled Idaho prospector. But every wilderness experience is worthy of respect.

(Miller, p.206)

This was the wilderness I had come to experience.



It was how they danced,
The trees with long green needles,
How they stood in the wind,
Bending and swaying,
And how they came to the water and drank...
there among the rocks,
Three sisters.

Then there was movement I could see. Mixed among the variegated hues of green...ferns and grasses, bushes and small trees loaded with blue huckleberries and red choke cherries...a flash of grey, and the trail that was an invisible path is traced by a fat squirrel bounding with its tail high. It goes down steeply, switchbacks through the trees down to the river...not the way I had imagined. But now it etched into my mind. I think how strange it is that I hadn't really known the trail until I looked back, until I caught sight of someone else on it. I relaxed into a simple experiential knowledge that unfolded within me. I was learning to see.

I watched the bluejays, fifty or more that came each day swooping from limb to limb with raucous laughter, feet curled under with utmost ease. And in the quiet I heard the voice that was the river passing among the rocks and over stones, everywhere at once, making its way through steep green canyons to the sea. I tried to catch the words mingling with the shushing of the trees. Perhaps this is where our speech began, I thought to myself. Maybe long ago before there were words, there was only the river and people listened to the water...and the quiet whispering. I could only understand the laughter. I was still learning how to listen. Down by the water, a nameless little bird stood on the rocks near the rapids every evening, singing, its dark

body bobbing...then diving into the stream.

In the night, the canyon rose black beneath a starry sky, and on this soft velvet I painted pictures in my mind of what was hidden there, until the moon lifted above the rim and silver shadows danced down to the river and splashed across the rocks. At Slide Creek I slowed down to a stop, and all the hurried miles, the noise and smokey choke of the speeding roads and highways finally slid away. I stayed for five days.

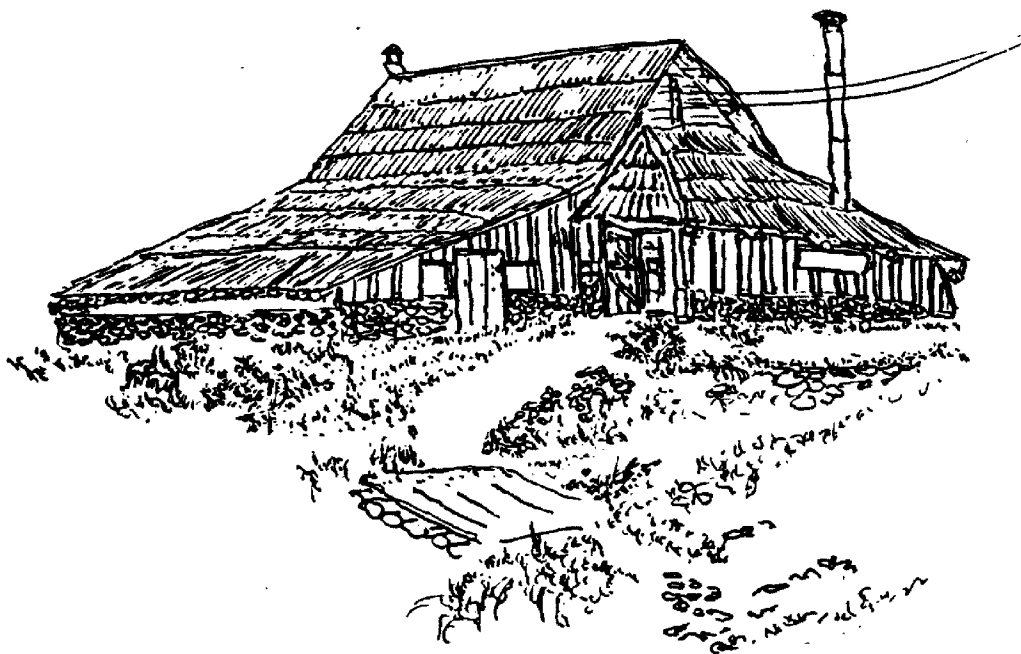
Then one morning came...the fishscale sky hinting rain... I left Slide Creek, stepping on five stones across the Chetco River, and continued south through the dense growths of poison oak. The trail greatly needed repairs, but I had grown to expect and accept it as a part of the wilderness...as much as the large striped-bodied hornets, dark and menacing, that would suddenly appear, grabbing moths from mid-air flight, and the threatening sound of a rattlesnake's tail shaking in the knee-high grass.

Two days later I arrived at the mining claim operated for the last 17 years by the two prospectors, Ruth and Perry Davis. I hadn't intended to stop, but I found myself walking up the trail toward Emily Cabin.

Perry was sitting in a rusted folding chair, shaded from the mid-day sun beneath a clump of maple trees. So intent was he at unlocking some mystery of the rock sample

at the other end of the magnifying lens he held, my approach was unnoticed. I stood almost beside him, continuing to make the little whistling sounds I had begun when I first started toward him. No one liked to be startled from their reverie, especially in the quiet of the woods.

Alongside the stone and cedar log cabin springwater issued from a large rusty pipe supported by stones and stuck



into the earth. The water splashed over moss-covered rocks and made its way past Perry to the Little Chetco River a ways below. A fly buzzed around his ear. He waved it away and, looking up, our eyes met for the first time. A sort of recognition passed through the lines of his face behind a push broom mustache and a grizzled, sour dough beard. He smiled.

"Well what do ya say," he exclaimed in a crackly voice that matched his appearance. "It's been a long time."

I was told that Ruth and Perry always welcomed wilderness travelers, and I would be no exception, even in my silence. But this greeting was unexpected.

I smiled and took the hand, knotted by years of hard work and river panning, that he extended in my direction. For a moment we looked at each other a little harder than before and arrived at the same conclusion together. This was our first meeting, but, no doubt, we each saw something familiar in the other, though we could not tell what. We both laughed.

"No matter," he said, pulling at a shock of snow-white hair that hung from under his worn felt hat.

He offered me the hospitality of the chair beside him. "It's just that I thought you were someone I knew."

Perry explained that his wife, Ruth, had gone to town for a few days in order to see the dentist. I handed him a recent newspaper clipping that explained about my walking and silence. He read it slowly. When he finished he told me about a couple who had come the year before. "Didn't say a word the whole time they were here," he said. "They were on some kind of word fast or something -- just smiled and nodded -- stayed pretty much to themselves down there at the Copper Creek campsite. By the way that's a

good place for you to set up camp -- water and a fire pit. You know how to handle fire don't ya?" he asked while giving me the once over. I nodded a reassuring yes that seemed to satisfy him. Just the same he went on about how the cabin and the whole valley could go up in smoke in a matter of minutes. He snapped his fingers to illustrate his point. Then his eyes smiled from behind horn rim glasses held together by wire and glue. "What do ya say, why don't ya come on up later this evening after you set up your camp and have something hot to drink." Perry liked to talk. He wasn't at all what I had expected.



That night I sat in the prospectors' log cabin at Perry's invitation. Warmed by the old wood-burning stove and the soft yellow glow of the oil lamps, I let the music pour from my banjo. Perry, dressed in his faded and worn pants and jacket was inspired to dance, strutting about and kicking his heels to my delight. I continued playing as Perry puffed thoughtfully on his pipe, sending blue-gray curls of sweet smoke beyond the reaches of the lamp's glow.

"That music," he said, "reminds me of a stream, a fast-flowing mountain stream."

He paused, puffed again and stared into the shadows.

"It brings to mind," he went on, "a peculiar little bird that lives near the rapids of such a stream."

The banjo fell almost silent as the words passed from his lips.

"A water ouzel," he said smiling. "Have you ever seen one?"

I nodded my head and laughed, not quite silently, at the communication of the music, and danced around like the bird I had seen several days before...bobbing up and down, then diving into invisible water.

I camped near the cabin for three days, visiting with Perry, drawing and painting while listening to stories about his life and the wilderness. He told me about the grizzly he and Ruth had seen a few winters back.



"Must've been the last one in these parts," he said. "It was in pretty bad shape. No one believed us, but we knew what we saw."

Born on an eastern Oregon homestead over 70 years ago, he was used to a ruggedly independent life. At five years old he was already helping his uncle string barb-wire fence and taking the team and wagon the twenty miles across the prairie to town for supplies by himself. "It seems as though I missed my childhood," he told me in a melancholy voice. He had spent most of his life on ranches or in the mountains prospecting, except for his time in the Coast

Guard during the Second World War, and even then he was in charge of the shore patrols because of his knowledge of horses.

He married Ruth, his hometown sweetheart, and after military service and an undergraduate degree at Stanford, he went off to New York and earned a PhD in physical education at Columbia University. It didn't take them long to decide that city life was not for them. They returned to the west coast and bought a sailboat. It was a freak of nature, the tidal wave that picked up their boat and deposited it on the beach of Crescent City, in the northwestern corner of California. But to Perry and Ruth it was a sign. They sold what was left of their boat and a few years later moved onto eight abandoned claims in what was then still national forest and began the arduous process of redeveloping the placer mine.

"All that glitters is not gold," he said and smiled as if he knew some great secret and was about to let me in on it.

"You know that's been said before but it's true," he assured me.

The fire crackled, taking the edge off the evening chill.

"There's gold here ya know, plenty of it, but it's not

just the kind you find at the bottom of your pan. Oh, there's enough of that too," he said. "But the gold I'm talking about is the gold of just being here. That's the most valuable of all. It's the one we're primarily interested in around here. If you look around you'll notice that we keep our other mining to a minimum. We take only what we need and disturb as little as you can."

I had to admit when I first arrived at the Davis' claim I expected to find monstrous machines, gouged and denuded earth, muddied streams and signs that read "Keep Out." What I found was just the opposite, bordering on the serenity of a garden. I was interested in what he had to say. In spite of being a "retired" professor, Perry liked to talk, and how he talked about things could easily be called lecturing. It must have been my own not talking and the word fast of the couple he had met earlier that had peaked his interest in the subject of being silent. It was obvious in the way he questioned me with his eyes that he had been giving the subject a great deal of thought. And then one night...

"Recapitulation."

That is what he said to me in the darkness of the cabin.

"That's what I think you are doing with all your walking and not talking, recapitulation. Do ya know what

that is?"

I shook my head.

"Well, it's like going back to the beginning of things and then working your way through all the successive stages of human development to where we are now. You must be going back to learn something. Recapitulation is a good teacher. Why, we all do it some way or another, especially before we're born."

He went on to explain about how the human fetus starts out as one cell which multiplies into something with gills, and then a tail before emerging into the world like we do.

"We're just goin' through all our ancestral stages on the way here," he said. "Somehow, whether you know it or not you're doing the same thing. I suspect one of these days you'll be riding in cars and jabberin' away again, but you'll be different. No doubt the world will be different too."

Ruth returned the day before I was ready to leave. At seventy she was thin and wiry with an outspokenness one expected of a pioneering woman. She thanked me for keeping Perry company while she was away, as if we had planned it in advance.

"Dear, did you talk this child's ear off?" she asked Perry in mock reproach.



Perry only smiled, puffed thoughtfully on his pipe. They had been together for nearly fifty years, and it seemed I had too little time to know her, but each of the following years I returned, and we all grew closer.

It was during the winter that my friend Cherry and I snowshoed into Emily Cabin for a visit. Cherry was blonde, nineteen, athletic and liked to think of herself as a tomboy. She had graduated from high school recently and I had promised her a trip north. We had made the walk up from the Bay Area together. Travel in the Kalmiopsis during the

winter months is not easy, and Ruth and Perry were happy to have company.



"I'm getting too old for this," Ruth confided, as she added a few more sticks to the fire. "The winters are just too hard and lonely."

The Davis' had no children of their own. They made up for it by adopting the backpackers who came through and shared their vision of wilderness preservation. Taking them into their hearts, they were turned into a family...and so it was with my friend.

Ruth would not hear of us eating dinner alone at Hawk's Creek Cabin where we had set up temporary residence. It was an old log cabin at the far end of their mining claim about a mile from Emily. We had stumbled on to it near night fall after coming down from the snow the day before, wet and tired. To us the dirt-floored shelter with its little woodburning stove was paradise.

"You kids are going to eat with us while you're here," she insisted. "We have plenty of supplies."

We agreed and ended up staying for over a week, adding what we could afford to the larder. On my birthday Ruth managed a yellow cake with white frosting and a couple of dozen candles. It was a happy time. "You two must love it here as much as we do," Perry said, after we had finished washing the dinner dishes.

He was referring to my yearly thousand-mile pilgrimage to the Kalmiopsis, in which he now included Cherry. He chuckled, not expecting an answer, but I knew when something was on Perry's mind. His mouth would open slightly at the corner as if he were chewing on a straw. Ruth was warming herself behind the stove smiling, pretending she wasn't listening, but she always did. She was forever correcting or adding to Perry's lectures with an appropriate date or detail that made listening more like hearing a duet.

"You know," now Perry was talking in a kind of gruff and authoritative voice, like he hoped to find courage in his tone, "a feller couldn't do too bad by himself living in a place like this."

It was something I had heard him say many times over the years when talking about his and Ruth's decision to make a go of the Emily claims. But this time when it was all over he asked us if we would consider moving into Copper Creek Cabin in the fall.

"We're getting too old to do it alone much longer," he said.

We moved in the following fall and for nearly ten months lived in a little redwood cabin next to Copper Creek. Around us grew the trees of my dreams -- Port Orford cedars for which I had searched stood tall and straight with deeply grooved bark, green scale-like fronds in place of leaves, tiny white x's on their backs, mingled with Douglas firs, pines, maples and spruce. I talked with Perry about sailing and building wooden ships and he talked to me about the mountains and their gold and things he felt important. He sent me off to read Walden.

"It's what I've tried to model my life after," he said, "A feller could do worse."

It wasn't always that way, though, and he told us about the time he was about to flatten off a mountain to

make a wilderness landing strip for the plane he wanted to buy.

"Naturally the Forest Service didn't go for it," he chuckled. "I wouldn't think of doing anything like that now, though. Back then we didn't know any better."

He stopped talking and puffed on his everpresent pipe. Five years had passed, and each day together was like the first day we had met. But I could see they were getting older now. The cold and loneliness bothered Ruth, and Perry's hearing and short-term memory were beginning to go. It was getting to the time when they would have to leave. He would say, "We're only visitors anyway."

Then one day he surprised us.

"You know you and Cherry could buy this place from us if you wanted."

He quoted us a ridiculously low price and talked about our staying and taking over when they would leave. The selling of mining claims was a common occurrence in the national forest. What was actually being sold were the mineral rights, but as in the case of the Emily claims it involved the transfer of historical land-marks and a way of life. Cherry and I talked about what taking over would mean. It was something not to be taken lightly. It would mean a commitment and a lot of hard work.

Spring came and we walked out of the wilderness to

raise the money for the purchase. When we returned, Perry surprised us again, this time by telling us that in our absence they had sold the claims to someone else, someone they didn't know. "We couldn't saddle you kids with all this," Ruth said sincerely, as if she was sparing us from some great burden. We could not disguise our hurt, nor did we try. Perry was convinced that he had done the right thing for us -- that living in the Kalmiopsis was not really the gold that it seemed.

"I know you don't understand it now," he said, "but one day you'll thank us."

At the time we thought it was just the rationalization of an old man who was losing his faculty for clear thought. After all, we had shaken hands in agreement of the sale, and we felt betrayed.

It took us a little while to see it from their point of view. After living an idyllic life in the wilderness for nearly twenty-five years, old age was now forcing them back into a world from which they had escaped. Their situation really shouldn't have come as such a shock to us. Disenchantment had become part of their conversations. The isolation, long winters, and the hard work necessary to stay had become too great. If we were to take over it would be something that we would eventually have to face, too.

I had to admit that despite my disappointment there

was also a feeling of relief. There was still much that begged to be done in my life. I had wanted to finish school, and I still wanted to build boats and sail around the world. In all honesty I was not ready to settle into a wilderness retreat and I knew it. Maybe Perry knew it too. For me wilderness still was a place to visit, a place to be refreshed and renewed, and my time for this visit was drawing to a close. There was always a wilderness beside the road.

We were about ready to leave when Perry called me into his cabin study. It was actually the original part of the cabin and over a century old. The kitchen and living room area he and Ruth had added during restoration. With only one window covered with frosted plastic, the study was dark. From the shadows Perry retrieved a wooden case a little larger than a cigar box.

"Here," he said as he handed me the box, "we want you to have this."

Inside the brass hinged case was the navy sextant that he had salvaged from his sailboat years ago. It was the instrument that had helped them find their way on the open seas of the Pacific.

"You'll need it on your journey."

There was water in the corner of his eyes. It caught what little light there was. I was touched. I had

seen the sextant only once while listening to a spirited and emotional episode about their time sailing. It was all they had left of that time besides the memories, and now, for Perry, even those were being lost.

"Ruth never liked sailing," he said after I thanked him. "That's part of the reason why after the wreck we moved onto dry land. Oh, it's been a good life all right, but the one thing you should do, John, is to continue following your dreams." Perry spoke in the most fatherly voice that I could remember him ever having used. I suppose he was right. I sent the sextant south to California for safekeeping.

Years later I was offered the chance to buy several other gold claims next to Emily. I turned the offer down. By that time I had taken to heart what the old man said. I had discovered the real gold and was following my own dream. I had begun my pilgrimage.



Chapter VIII

School of Reflection

Cherry returned by bike to Marin County to be with her family and I went on to Ashland, Oregon. There were friends I wanted to visit, so Cherry and I made plans to meet each other later. It had been three years since I first arrived in Ashland on my way to the wilderness, after climbing 14,000-foot Mt. Shasta in northern California. It was a long, hot walk up the Sacramento Valley and I was looking forward to the stop. As I came down from the highway, I walked by neat wood and brick apartments that were married student housing for Southern Oregon State College. How pleasant it would be to live and go to school here, I thought. That feeling was reinforced when I saw the campus. It was a small school with an enrollment of about 5,000. A tree-lined street led into the center of town, multi-colored banners with images of lions flew from the lamp posts heralding the Shakespearean Festival that had achieved world renown. There was a holiday mood. I stayed for a few weeks, making friends and playing music at the restaurants and in the plaza. I liked the town immediately and the town liked me. If I returned to school, I thought to myself, this is the place I'd like to do it.

Nevertheless, I was unsure about enrolling in a degree program while maintaining a vow of silence; that insecurity had kept me from attending school before. After reading some news clippings interspersed with a few scribbled notes, however, Dr. Davidson, the registrar, was telling me how he had faith that I could do it.

"You may have to get permission from individual instructors," he suggested as I filled out an application form, "but you'll find we have some innovative programs here for the nontraditional student."

He was talking about the Prior Learning Experience program (PLE) that gave up to two years of college credit for demonstrating knowledge gained from life experiences outside the traditional college setting. The idea excited me. In order to qualify for the program, a three-credit course in writing and documenting a PLE portfolio was required. It was the first class I signed up for.

Ann Deering, our instructor, was a small but heavily-built woman with short, ear-length blonde hair who loved horses and dogs, subjects she would be happy to talk about after class. During class she talked about discovering who we were through looking at where we had been and trying to see where we were going. There were about a dozen students in our class, from twenty-five to fifty years old. Most had jobs and families and were returning to school for various

reasons. Some hoped to make job adjustments and career changes. I wasn't sure why I was there.

"What I want you to do," said Ann, drawing a horizontal line with yellow chalk across a green chalkboard, "is to imagine this line as your life. This is the beginning and here is where it ends."

There was an uncomfortable silence and sideways glances.

"How long do you expect to live?" she asked the class.

There were no answers.

"Sixty-five, seventy...a hundred years?" she questioned.

Suddenly a pall had dropped over the classroom. A woman about thirty-five raised her hand.

"What does this have to do with our prior learning?" she asked. "I have a family and I don't like to think about dying."

It was clear that she was upset and that she spoke for the rest of us.

"I know you might think this is a morbid way to begin a Prior Learning class, but the important thing here is to realize that our lives are finite; they have a beginning and an end. When making our short and long-range goals, we have to keep this in mind."

What she said was an obvious truth, yet no one had much to say about it except her.

"Look," said Ann, "suppose you were born in 1935, that would make you forty-four now."

She scribbled the numbers beside the yellow line on the board.

"And let's say you would live to be seventy-four; that would mean you'd have thirty years to realize your long-range goal. It's nothing we have to dwell on, but it's something to keep in mind."

There were some more uneasy comments from an older man in the class about how he didn't want to know when he was going to die.

"It's impossible for me to know anyway," he said nervously.

Ann was undaunted by the response and asked us to make our own charts as an exercise at home. Not many of us did it, though. There were other projects that we were asked to do that were less threatening, like writing short autobiographies or chronological resumes, identifying experiences that were similar to courses offered in college. But none was as powerful as the first, and no one would be able to forget seeing their life as a dull yellow line scratched across a green chalk board. I know I couldn't, and for awhile all I had done and all I wanted to do seemed

to lose importance. Once again I was forced to face death, and it made me feel very small, very fragile. My head filled with images of oil-soaked seabirds, bodies rotting on a California shore, Jerry Tanner lost in Tomales Bay, and the crushed body of a small robin on a Philadelphia street. But in facing death we experience the whole of life, and in that experience we find meaning and are obligated to act, often under great difficulty.

Attending classes without talking was difficult, though I had been preparing for it over the years. There were a few professors who questioned my sincerity at first, but as long as I was able to do the work, they were satisfied. I communicated as I always had, with mime, acting out, or when all else failed, I resorted to writing notes. Communicating in a specific class was easier than you might think. Since everyone was in the same mind set it usually required very little to ask a question or to get a point across. But most of all I listened from within the silence that had grown to be so much a part of my life. During summer school I enrolled in a biology class titled "Conservation of Human and Natural Resources," and for the first time in my life I learned there was something called environmental studies.

The course was based on the book, Living in the Environment, by G. Tyler Miller, an introduction to

environmental studies. Inside, the multi-faceted study of environmental problems opened before me, with presentations of basic ecological concepts and approaches I had yet to be exposed to. From population, resources and pollution, to earthmanship, environment and society, the class delved into how each of us contributes to problems or solutions. There was even a section about the dream of fusion...it wasn't so close after all. It was like making a new friend or finding the missing piece to a puzzle. There was just so much!

There were about ten of us in the class. We sat in a circle and discussed every issue, every problem and every concept that came up in our reading. Often we couldn't agree on specific points, but we were unanimous on one. In spite of the seriousness of all the environmental problems we had learned about, the threat of nuclear war seemed to be the most pressing. That nuclear war was an environmental problem had somehow eluded me.



Chapter IX

War, Peace, and Environment

Many labor under the illusion that only war is evil and that only if it could be averted man could go on peacefully to create paradise on Earth. What is forgotten is that in both the state of war and peace man is waging incessant war upon nature.

The Encounter of Man and Nature, Seyyed Nasr, 1968

It was not very long after embarking on my journey that I began hearing of others. "The Bethlehem Peace Pilgrimage," a group of eighteen pilgrims led by Father Jack Morris, was on its way across the United States to the Holy Land. C.B. Hall, with several pilgrims on the "World Peace Walk" was in Europe and on the way to Moscow. And a group led by Columbia University students comprising the "Plowshares Pilgrimage" were nearing the Pantex Plant where the nation's nuclear warheads were being assembled in Amarillo, Texas. The promotion of world peace and related ideals such as human rights, environmental sanity, and social justice are the unifying themes connecting these modern-day pilgrims -- to create social dialogue and effect social change; but none captured my imagination and inspired me as did the woman known as "Peace Pilgrim."

I was touring the "New Morning Peace Center" in Anderson, California when a photograph stapled to the wall

caught my attention. It showed a silver-haired woman with a determined look, striding down a country road. Across the dark tunic she wore were two words, "Peace Pilgrim." My host, Robert, was talking about the center's vegetable garden project when he noticed me stopped in front of the picture.

"You know about her, don't you?" he asked.

I shook my head as I tried to take in more details of the woman's image.

"That's Peace Pilgrim. I'm surprised you haven't heard of her," he said. "She's walked across the country about a half a dozen times."

He carefully removed the picture from the wall and handed it to me. It was actually the folded cover of a book, Peace Pilgrim, Her Life Works In Her Own Words. On the back cover was a smaller photograph and a few paragraphs explaining that she had walked more than 25,000 miles, penniless, carrying a simple message of peace, and how people had been inspired by her lifestyle because she lived what she believed.

Immediately I felt a kinship and at the same time humbled. It was the first time I had heard of anyone that had given up automobiles not just for a few months of walking, but for a lifetime. In her I thought I would be able to see a clearer reflection of myself. That she had

walked nearly three decades with only the clothes on her back made me question more than the contents in my pack.

Peace Pilgrim had passed through Anderson several times, and it happened that one of the people she had stayed with was at the center. Robert introduced me to her.

"Oh yes," she said, "Peace Pilgrim was a remarkable woman...a true saint."

I cringed at the word "saint." People had use that word on occasion to describe me, and I did not like it.

"It's too bad that you won't get to meet her, though," she continued. "She was killed in an automobile accident a few years ago."

Shaking my head at the irony, I felt the loss and left that afternoon walking north, wondering who Peace Pilgrim was. What life experiences had delivered her onto the path of a pilgrim, and what message might her life hold for me and others?

By the time I had reached Washington and stopped for the winter, I had received a copy of Peace Pilgrim's book and I began my inquiry into her life through reading, letters, recorded tapes and personal interviews with people she had touched. Peace Pilgrim, who walked penniless over 25,000 miles "as a prayer and a chance to inspire others," took shape before me. The brief leaflet she carried introduced her aptly:

You may see her walking through your town or along the highway -- a silver-haired woman dressed in navy blue slacks and shirt, and a short tunic with pockets all around the bottom in which she carries her only worldly possessions. It says "Peace Pilgrim" in white letters on the front of the tunic and "25,000 Miles On Foot for Peace" on the back. However, she continues to walk, for her vow is, "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food." She walks without a penny in her pockets and she is not affiliated with any organization. She walks as a prayer and a chance to inspire others to pray and work with her for peace. She speaks to individuals along the way, to gatherings such as church groups or college groups, through newspapers, magazines, radio, television -- relating interesting and meaningful experience, discussing peace within and without. She feels we have learned that war is not the way to peace -- that security does not lie in stockpiles of bombs. She points out that this is a crisis period in human history, and that we who live in the world today must choose between a nuclear war of annihilation and a golden age of peace. Although she does not ask to see results, thousands of letters testify that her journey has not been in vain -- saying in effect, "Since talking with you I've decided that I should be doing something for peace also."

In 1908, Peace Pilgrim Mildred Norman was born into a poor farming family on the outskirts of a small northeastern town. Despite the poverty, she saw wealth in the natural surrounding of fields, woods and creeks. "There was room to grow," she said, calling this her "...very favorable beginnings. We begin to prepare for the work that we have to do and customarily we have no idea what we are preparing for."

In contrast to the tolerant and humble person of

later years, Norman was the captain of her high school debating team and had a commanding presence that demanded others to take notice. Makeup and expensive clothes were a trademark, and she often made special trips to Atlantic City to get her shoes dyed to match her other fashion accessories. Surprisingly, she was not a tolerant person, especially of other races, and disapproved of her sister's friends who were not of her class. (LA Times, 1/2/86)

But it was the realization that money and things would not bring happiness that Peace claimed got her started on the preparation for the pilgrimage. "I was trained to be generous and unselfish," she said, "and at the same time trained to believe that if I wanted to be successful I must get out there and grab more than my share of the world's goods. These conflicting philosophies which I gathered from my childhood environment confused me for some time. But eventually I uprooted this false training." This happened after she discovered that making money was easy, and that spending it foolishly on more of what she didn't need was completely meaningless.

As Norman looked about the world she became increasingly uncomfortable that she had so much while others were starving.

"Finally I had to find another way," she said. "The turning point came when, in desperation and out of a very

deep seeking for a meaningful way of life, I walked all one night through the woods. I came to a moonlit glade and prayed. (After her death, two longtime friends, John and Ann Rush speculated that it was the combined unhappiness of an unsuccessful marriage and the death of her father in an automobile accident two years prior that prompted Norman to walk in the woods all of one night, which lead to the vision of her pilgrimage.)

"I felt a complete willingness, without any reservation, to give my life -- to dedicate my life -- to service. 'Please use me!' I prayed to God. And a great peace came over me.

"I tell you it's a point of no return...from that time on, I have known that my life work would be for peace...peace among nations, peace among groups, peace among individuals, and a very, very important inner peace. However, there's a great deal of difference between being 'willing' to give your life and actually 'giving' your life, and for me fifteen years of preparation and inner seeking lay between."

Inner peace was the key to Peace Pilgrim's pilgrimage; without it she said no other peace could be attained, and she defined four steps, besides a humble stature, that she had taken in preparation. The first was "a right attitude toward life. Being willing to face life

squarely," she said, "and get down beneath the surface of life where the verities and realities are found.

"If only you could see the whole picture, if you knew the whole story, you would realize that no problem ever comes to you that does not have a purpose in your life, that cannot contribute to your inner growth. When you perceive this, you will recognize that problems are opportunities in disguise. If you did not face problems, you would just drift through life."

The second step had to do with living a harmonious life. Reminiscent of the earliest theories of ecology, Peace professed that certain laws governed the created worlds and beings, not the "eye for an eye" laws of the Old Testament, but principles more in keeping with Barry Commoner's "Laws of Ecology" dealing with the interrelatedness of the environment. The further we move from adhering to these principles the more difficulty we create for our lives. "We are our own worst enemies," said Peace. "So I got busy on a very interesting project. This was to live all the good things I believed in."

The third preparation was finding our special place in life's pattern. "No two people have exactly the same part to play in God's plan. There is a guidance which comes from within to all who listen." She suggested that people try seeking that guidance in a receptive silence. "I used

to walk amid the beauties of nature," she said during one of her talks, "just receptive and silent, and wonderful insights would come to me. ...In the beginning I helped people in simple ways with errands, gardening projects and by reading to them. I spent some time in the private homes of the elderly and recuperating ill, assisting them to overcome their various ailments. I worked with troubled teenagers, the psychologically disturbed, and the physically and mentally handicapped. My motives were pure and much of my work did have a positive and good effect."

This was a fairly startling statement even for Peace Pilgrim, in a historical period given over to skepticism. Her statement is misleading in as much as it suggests we should act only when we have determined our motives are pure. Such a prerequisite might preclude any action at all. It is action, no matter how ingenuous, that will effect change in our world. In January of 1953, the same year that she began her pilgrimage, Henry G. Bugbee published his paper, "The Moment of Obligation in Experience," in which he explored the difficulty of determining the ultimate justification for any action, whether our motives be pure or not. He suggests, however, that the effects of our actions, regardless of their motive, can be for the good:

That spirit out of which men may benefit each other most profoundly seems to bear on their actions, however complex and planned, with simplicity and directness. Perhaps even an

intention of benefiting others is irrelevant to our capacity to do so.

(Bugbee, p.6)

It is by insight into the nature of the creative process that we can transcend this fascination for purity of motive. Granted, motives are an important consideration in as much as they move us through the process of change, development, and evolution, in the organization of our subjective life. Norman comes closest to touching on this when she states, "We begin to prepare for the work that we have to do and customarily we have no idea what we are preparing for." This creative state is similar to the liminal phase in van Gennep's study of rites of passage when the pilgrim is neither connected to where he has been or where he is going:

Yet it is only as the work is done that the meaning of the creative effort can appear and that the development of the artist brought about by it is attained.

(Ghiselin, p.13)

The fourth and final step was "the simplification of life." "Just after dedicating myself to service," said Peace, "I felt that I could no longer accept more than I need while others in the world have less than they need. This moved me to bring my life down to a need level. I thought it would be difficult. I thought it would entail a great many hardships, but I was quite wrong.

"There is a great freedom in simplicity of living,

and after I began to feel this, I found harmony in my life between inner and outer well-being."

There was no special order in the steps of preparation to inner peace. Norman even suggested that they could be condensed or expanded. "The first step for one may be the last step for another," she acknowledged. "So just take whatever steps seem easiest for you, and as you take a few steps, it will become easier for you to take a few more."

It was this articulation of her inner pilgrimage, with its succession of steps toward peace, that touched me most deeply. For me her spirit served as a guide and her words a crude map, and perhaps for the first time I realized that I had embarked on the invisible journey... We all had. Once again, Merton says (Zacher, p.92):

The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey. The inner journey is the extrapolation of the meaning and signs of the outer pilgrimage, one can have one without the other. It's best to have both.

Merton
1964

After completing a hike of the Appalachian Trail, Norman was sitting high on a hill overlooking the New England countryside when the inspiration for her pilgrimage came:

"I went out for a time alone with God. While I was out a thought struck my mind: I felt a strong inner

motivation toward the pilgrimage -- toward this special way of witnessing for peace.

"I saw, in my mind's eye, myself walking along and wearing the garb of my mission... I saw, a map of the United States with the large cities marked -- and it was as though someone had taken a colored crayon and marked a zigzag line across, coast to coast and border to border, from Los Angeles to New York City. I knew what I was to do. And that was a vision of my first year's pilgrimage route in 1953!

"I entered a new and wonderful world. My life was blessed with a meaningful purpose.

"I realized in 1952 that it was the proper time for a pilgrim to step forth. The war in Korea was raging and the McCarthy era was at its height. It was a time when congressional committees considered people guilty until they could prove their innocence. There was great fear at that time and it was safest to be apathetic. Yes, it was most certainly a time for a pilgrim to step forward, because a pilgrim's job is to rouse people from apathy and make them think.

"With the last bit of money I had left, I bought not only paper and stencil for my first messages but material for my first tunic. Although I designed it, the sewing was done by a lady in California, and the lettering was painted

by a man who was a sign painter. My initial reaction when I first put it on was a wonderful 'rightness' about it, and I immediately accepted it."

On New Year's day, 1953, Mildred Norman left behind all claims to her name, property, and personal history. She took the name Peace Pilgrim, and before the backdrop of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, she began her pilgrimage. In 1983, after walking for twenty-eight years, Peace Pilgrim made what she called her "glorious transition to a freer life," when she was killed in an automobile accident near Knox, Indiana.

Unlike millenarian pilgrims of the past, interpreting vague signs alluding to the world's imminent destruction, today's peace pilgrim, and perhaps the world, recognizes the eschatological threat of nuclear annihilation facing us. What makes this apocalyptic vision more real and therefore more demanding of our action, is the realization that it is of our own creation and not the product of any particular religious doctrine or superstitious interpretation of the vagaries in nature. The motivation and goals of the new pilgrim incorporate that which is intensely personal with the universal concerns for peace and the environment shared by all.

In this light, the importance of Peace Pilgrim is not her apparent saintliness or purity of motive, but her

humanness and the sincerity of her actions. For in her sincerity, she is humble and ordinary...a person who has accepted the obligation of extraordinary action, as did Kurosawa's hero who uses the last year of his life in the action of service, and like other pilgrims on the path of peace with man and nature:

We may find ourselves acting under great difficulty; our resources may be taxed to the limit; we may be faced with a most uncertain future; and the failure of enterprises on which we have set our hearts may stare us in the face; yet, under genuine obligation, we may stand and stand firm, we may act decisively.

(Bugbee, p.6)

* * *

Mountain on Fire

Smokless, gold and crimson flames

Fall from every tree

Idaho-Montana border 1984

Twinkling stars faded with the dawn. Rusty-red and pink clouds blended into a light-blue sky, setting off the golden larch along the road and on the hillsides. Parked at the summit were two trucks, engines running, windows fogged, the drivers sleeping. I wondered if Peace Pilgrim had come this way...I was sure she had. I wondered what she felt after climbing that last hill. My feet ached, but I did not listen to the nagging inside that said they hurt too much to walk. Perhaps she had felt the same. I took two aspirin,

ignored the pain, and moved slowly onto the highway. There was little traffic. Walking east, I crossed into Montana, following the path, because we must...



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